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ILLUSTRATED

this issue:
MIKE BARON • JOHN TOTLEBEN
KENT WILLIAMS • P. CRAIG RUSSELL

plus:
the conclusion of
TOADSWART
by TIM CONRAD

cover story
JOHNNY BADHAIR
by PHIL HALE

0 71486 02620 12

Her mother was the first-born of Caesar.
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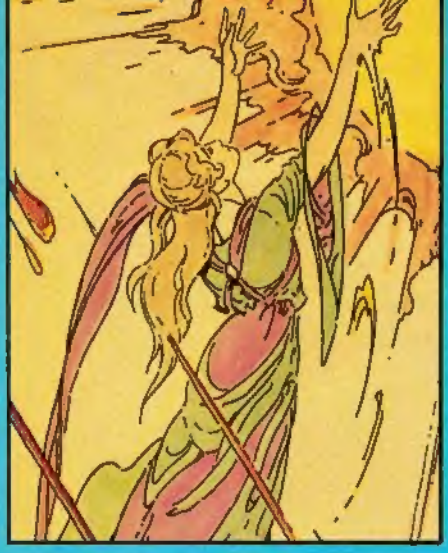

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DECEMBER 1985 VOL. 1, NO. 33

CONTENTS

The Last Galactus Story/Page 9
light at the end of the tunnel and a couple of small surprises
story & pencils by John Byrne/inks by Terry Austin/colors by Glynis Wein

Dr. Watchstop: Reaching Out & Beating the Heat/Page 21
two more encounters with science's wisest fool
story & art by Ken Macklin

The Elements/Page 27
portfolio visions of what's best in nature
art by Tim Conrad

Briar Rose/Page 31
when entertaining important guests, it's best not to run short of flatware
script by Lynn Parrish/art by Kent Williams

Feedback/Page 35
letters from our readers

Toadswart: Chapter VII/Page 36
revelations and reunions as the tale concludes
story & art by Tim Conrad

Fish Story/Page 45
who knows what evil lurks in the heart of the deep?
story by Mike Baron/art by John Totleben

Ein Heldenstraum/Page 53
recovery, consolation, and loss
story and artwork by P. Craig Russell/script by Patrick Mason

Snowmen/Page 68
ice follies
story & art by Kent Williams

Snickers: That's Entertainment/Page 73
in space, no one can hear you laugh
story by Kevin Duane/art by Mark Bodé

Champion/Page 75
something new in student/teacher relations
story by Gene Day/script by Doug Moench/art by Dan Day

Johnny Badhair/Page 91
this Maniac's for you
story and art by Phil Hale

cover/Phil Hale
artwork © 1985 Phil Hale

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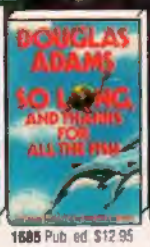

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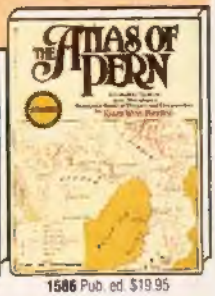

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OVERVIEW
notes on stories & contributors

If you're the kind of person who reads the letter pages of a magazine before anything else, or if you're enough of a comics fan to follow trade publications and fanzines, then you probably already know the news we're about to announce. Next issue will be the last issue of **Epic Illustrated.** Since most of the details behind the cancellation are covered in our **Feedback** column, we won't go into any sort of post mortem. The five years of doing the magazine have been good ones and have led to our growing from a solitary title to an entire line of specialized comics, so the effort has not only paid off, but will continue to make itself felt even after the magazine is gone. We owe a great many thank yous—not the least of which should go to all the readers who have supported us over our run—and we'll try to take care of them next time around when we do the last **Overview.** For now, let's talk about *this* issue.

THE ELEMENTS & TOADSWART

From the second **Epic Illustrated** on, artist and sometimes writer **Tim Conrad** has been a consistent contributor. Consistent in producing a steady flow of work for us—ranging from covers to short stories to series and portfolios—and consistent in producing work of remarkable artistry. This time out, along with a look at Tim's latest full color paintings in his portfolio **The Elements,** we have the conclusion of what is probably Mr. Conrad's most ambitious project, his long running serial, **Toadswart.** Along with the twists and turns of plot his doom-shadowed gothic fantasy takes, it also has been an excursion into the realm of black and white rendering at its best. In an era in comics when lack of color is sometimes labelled a liability, Tim has managed to imbue every chapter with the same richness, depth, and textures of any full color paintings. It's not the easiest nor the most practical way to do graphic story art, but it's a substantial achievement and one particularly well-suited to the vehicle in which Tim chose to exhibit it.

BRIAR ROSE & SNOWMEN

Another dual contribution this issue comes from **Kent Williams.** Kent first began contributing to **Epic** while still attending Brooklyn's **Pratt Institute.** Since he's still a relatively recent graduate, we tend to think of Kent as one of our newcomers. But by the number of stories he's done for us over the last couple of years, you'd have to rate him a veteran. His facility and versatility are also not those of a novice. These two stories give a good idea of his range. The somber **Briar Rose**, with its formal text-and-illustration design, showcases his oil painting, while **Snowmen** allows not only the lighter approach of water color but the lighter touch of humor in its story. And if it sounds like we're bragging about Kent, at least we're not alone, **Communications Art** magazine recently included his work in their illustration annual. Currently, Kent is working on a fill-in issue of **Epic's** highly praised **Moonshadow** comic, helping out writer **J.M. DeMatteis** and regular artist **Jon J Muth.**

DOCTOR WATCHSTOP

Having just cited two other contributors who have two pieces in this issue, we'd be remiss if we didn't also mention **Ken Macklin.** Since February 1982, this San Francisco based writer/artist has been spinning tales of **Dr. Watchstop** for us. Even accomplished writers in comics generally have trouble doing short stories; the rule of thumb is usually that the fewer pages you have to work with, the more difficult it is to bring off

a good story. Most of us fight to keep things down to eight pages. Ken rarely exceeds four, and usually gets by with three. So here, with **Reaching Out** and **Beating the Heat**, he gives us *two* tales in the same amount of space most people would be struggling to come up with one. Even if we didn't love Ken's characters and the dazzling and elaborate water color technique with which he brings them and their weird universe to life... How could we resist such a *bargain?*

FISH STORY
If you're into the current comics scene, then you already know the writing of **Mike Baron** from First Comics' **Nexus** and **The Badger** and the artwork of **John Totleben** from DC's **Swamp Thing.** On **Swamp Thing**, John usually inks over the pencils of an early **Epic** contributor **Steve Bissette**, but, as some of John's painted **Swamp Thing** covers have proven, he is also a fine all around artist in his own right (as is Steve). And with this ecological cautionary tale, Mike has provided John with a chance to demonstrate just *how* fine that is. Having admired both Mr. Baron and Mr. Totleben for their separate accomplishments, we're proud to have the opportunity to present them working in tandem.

EIN HELDENSTRAUM
Besides being one of the foremost graphic story interpreters of **Michael Moorcock's** moody sword-and-sorcery hero, **Elric of Melniboné**, artist **P. Craig Russell** has often used his love of opera and classical music as a source of themes for the romantic fantasies he depicts. Though a relatively short work, **Ein Heldenstraum**, scripted by **Patrick Mason**, manages to incorporate many of the same themes and elements, both visual and dramatic, as in the more full blown pieces. But it does so with an interesting and poignant contemporary frame, allowing an opportunity to see Craig's assured draftsmanship, fine-line rendering, and subtle coloring applied to scenes and situations with which he is less commonly associated.

JOHNNY BADHAIR
We've published three other pieces by Boston's *Phil Hale*, but this issue's cover and related interior piece mark his first full color work for **Epic**. Phil has been doing science-fiction paperback covers for **Berkley Books**, **New American Library**, and **Simon & Schuster**. When he first approached us with his ideas for a possible cover, we were really taken with the imagery as well as the name he had for the character portrayed in his sketches, Johnny Badhair, and encouraged him to come up with an accompanying interior story. Phil's finished cover and the series of interior paintings for **Johnny Badhair** have excited a great number of fellow professionals who traipsed through our offices during the time we were waiting to send the material off to our engravers. Not being your usual character, **Johhny Badhair** is far from your usual story; more of a character study from conflicting points of view. Besides this too brief peek into the life and hard times of Johnny Badhair, Phil, along with his studio partner and fellow artist/designer, **Tom Canty**, has just produced the perfect mid-summer (at this writing) Christmas gift. **Donald Grant Publications** has just brought out a book that Phil and Tom collaborated on entitled a **Monster Christmas**. We've had advanced peeks at the material. We're not sure if even **Johnny Badhair** can totally prepare you for it. It's outrageous. And incredibly appealing. Remember you heard about it here first.

—Archie Goodwin

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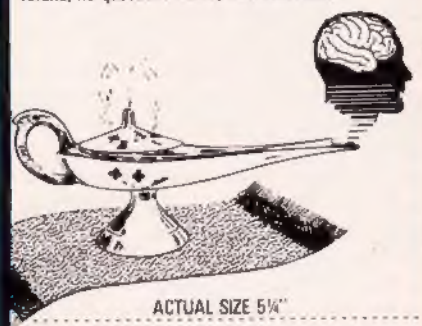

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BOOKVIEW

by Jo Duffy

There's no denying that **Harlan Ellison** is a fine writer. For any of you who don't know, he is the author of dozens of books in the genre of science-fiction and the fantastic, the odd comics job here and there, both original screenplays and screen adaptations of his own work, and some of the finest, most influential, and fondly-remembered teleplays done back in the days when television was still a medium of story.

However, in spite of my admiration for **Ellison's** work, his powerful sense of story and character, and his masterful use of language, I have some problems about recommending his newest book, **An Edge in My Voice.** The reason is this—it isn't fiction. It is an extremely aptly titled collection of what must be some of the most vibratingly nasty and negativistic essays ever composed by any person of intelligence. Which isn't to say that I haven't enjoyed reading them. As a matter of fact, when **Kay Reynolds**—who edited this collection for **The Donning Company**—sent me tear sheets of the book, several weeks before its official release date, tearing them is pretty literally what I did, popping perforations and ripping unperforated folds in my eagerness to read it, but...

That was over a month ago...and I still haven't finished the book. And I'm not certain whether or not I ever will. It (and I) started out just fine. The essays—all reprints of a column that was produced on a weekly or monthly basis over the course of several years, with new bridging and explanatory material—are all relatively short and highly readable. **Ellison** is an intelligent man, intensely committed to all of the many things he believes in, and brilliantly savage toward the enemies of his beliefs. I agree with many of his opinions anyway, and there is something intensely flattering to oneself about reading the words of a person whose talent and intelligence one admires and mentally styling oneself that person's ally and colleague, arming the battlements of reason and right against virtually everybody else. There is also a great deal of entirely malicious fun to be had, watching as an endless parade of deserving targets are impaled, one after another, on the point of **Harlan's** lance. Hell, it's fun to be nasty.

A bunch of us do that every morning, over the first cup of coffee or tea before work, griping about all of the pinheads who abound in our lives and, at the same time, bringing one another up to date on what's happening with our various publications and creators. Once the information is passed on and the caffeine consumed, we put away our complaints, and throw away our empty cups, and get on with the business of business.

I imagine, if anyone taped those fifteen- and twenty- minute early morning hatchet jobs over a long period of time, and strung them together to listen to at one sitting, they would become pretty monotonous and unpleasant. Instead of a group of people who have a bit of fun while we let off a bit of steam at the expense of people whose identity varies from day to day and who'll probably never know or be hurt by it, my friends and I would come across as a cadre of unrelentingly nasty, sarcastic, bitter individuals. (Gee, and we thought we were so amusing, too!) Which is sort of the effect achieved by reading many of **Ellison's** essays at one sitting, removed from time and compressed between two covers. Sure, it's fun to get down and dirty...but so thoroughly, so much of the time? The amount of effort that must go into maintaining a stance of such constant intensity and anger is surely exhausting. I'm amazed that **Ellison** is left with any energy at all for his fiction.

An Edge in My Voice is a lot like a bag of **Fritos.** It's delicious, but a very little of it goes a long way. One bite at a time, you take too much of it, and you'll suddenly find yourself looking at the package and realizing that you've stuffed yourself full of something that, much as you liked it, is full of poisons and has ruined your appetite for any other fare, and you can no longer contemplate the remainder of the bag's contents with anything but a nauseated shudder.

I imagine, in a couple of weeks, I *will* probably again pick up **An Edge in My Voice.** I will not, however, read more than one or two of the essays in it at one time. Because that's probably the fairest way to read them—as they were written, over a long period of time. I also, occasionally, still eat **Fritos.** And **Harlan Ellison** is still one hell of a writer.

Time-Life Books is well known for packaging a number of handsome illustrated book series on a wide variety of topics. I'm certainly pleased with the one I'm currently reading, and I think a lot of you might be, too. **The Enchanted World** has run to five volumes that I know of so far, on **Witches and Wizards** (who I personally think could have each merited a separate volume), **Legends of Valor, Ghosts, Dwarfs,** and **Fairies and Elves.**

In fact, I have only two small complaints about the entire project. One is that this is the first in the **Time-Life** line of books that *looks* like a series for children, although it is not, which I think indicates a certain inherent cultural prejudice on the part of the editors and art directors, that modern people generally share about fantasy and folklore, and which may keep many fantasy devotees from giving this line the attention it deserves. The second is that I'm unhappy with some of the artists who've contributed. The use of traditional illustrators in such beautiful reproductions is extremely welcome, but a lot of the original art is being done by people who I'd probably reject if they submitted sample paintings to this magazine. And some of the finest fantasy illustrators working today are absent from the series.

I'll vouch for the writing. The books break down into stories told as fairy tales, gossipy footnotes and anecdotes, and very perceptive, albeit broad, analyses of the common elements that underlie most legends, and the local variations on each type played out across the world. Each can be read in a sitting, or flipped open and browsed through in chunks, depending on the mood of the reader.

I am frankly delighted that **Time-Life** has concerned itself with this subject matter. It's a sign that the world is acknowledging how widespread the love of and interest in fantasy has become. We've gone legit, kids.

Oh, yeah, since **O'Neil** hasn't done so in his **Mediaview** column, I'm advising those of you who like action adventures and don't mind a few story weaknesses to go to your local movie theater and see **Jackie Chan** in **The Protector.** Since it's not a book, and wouldn't really come across in print anyway, I have no business recommending it here—but what the heck, this is my second-to last column, and I feel like I owe something to the people who obviously devoted a lot of money, time, and effort to making a picture designed solely for *my* personal entertainment. Check it out some night when there aren't any good books in the house.

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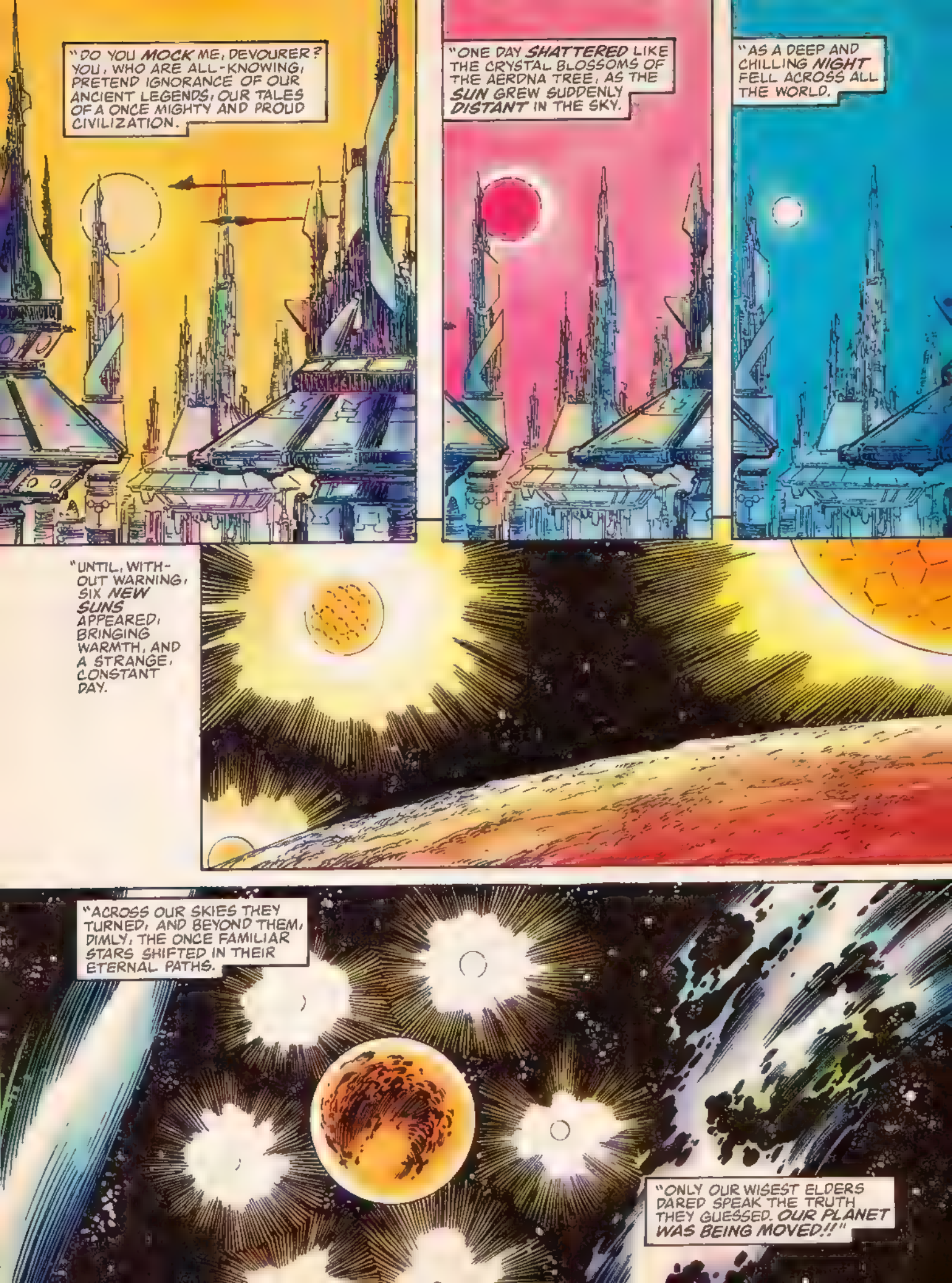
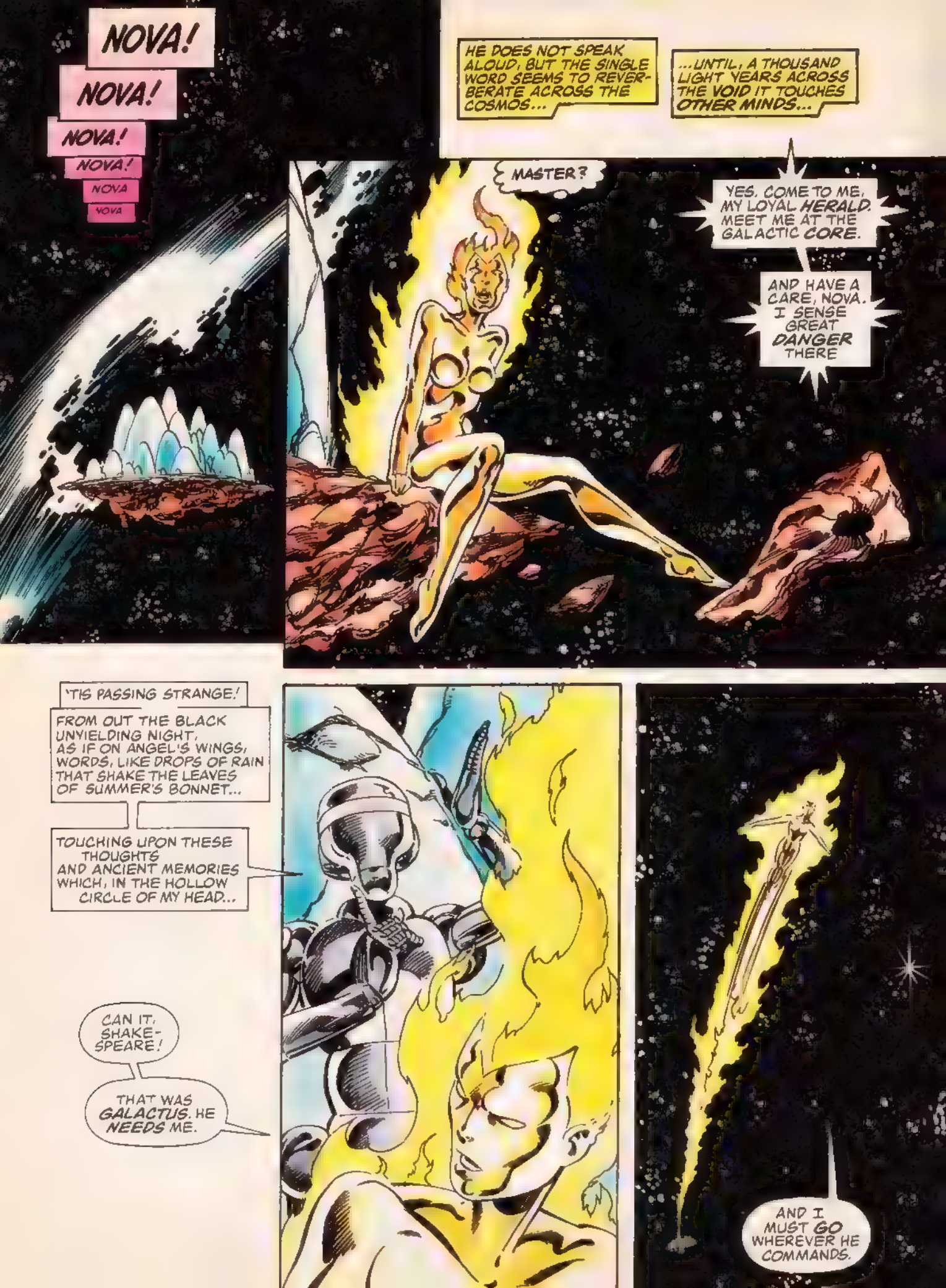
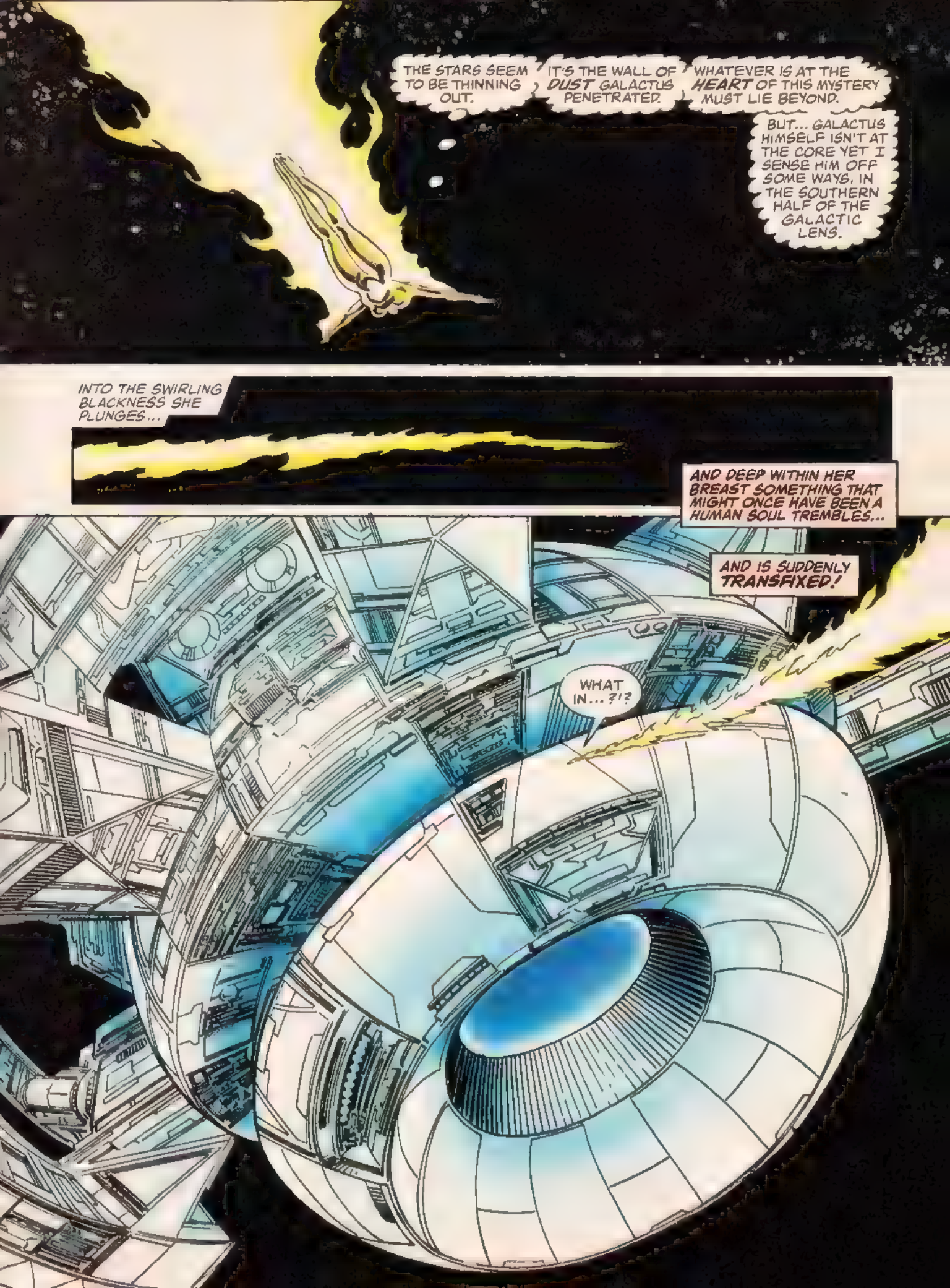
THIS IS NOT GOOD, SHAN-SAN! YOU ARE THE PROMISED OF Q'QRAK.
TO HAVE BEEN OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND WITH Q'PAK...
IT WAS NOT HER FAULT, ALL-FATHER! I HAVE PURSUED SHAN-SAN FOR MANY TURNINGS!
I KNEW HER TO BE PROMISED TO ANOTHER, BUT MY OWN FIRES WOULD NOT HEED THE CUSTOM.
FASCINATING!
AM I TO BE SO EASILY FORGOTTEN?

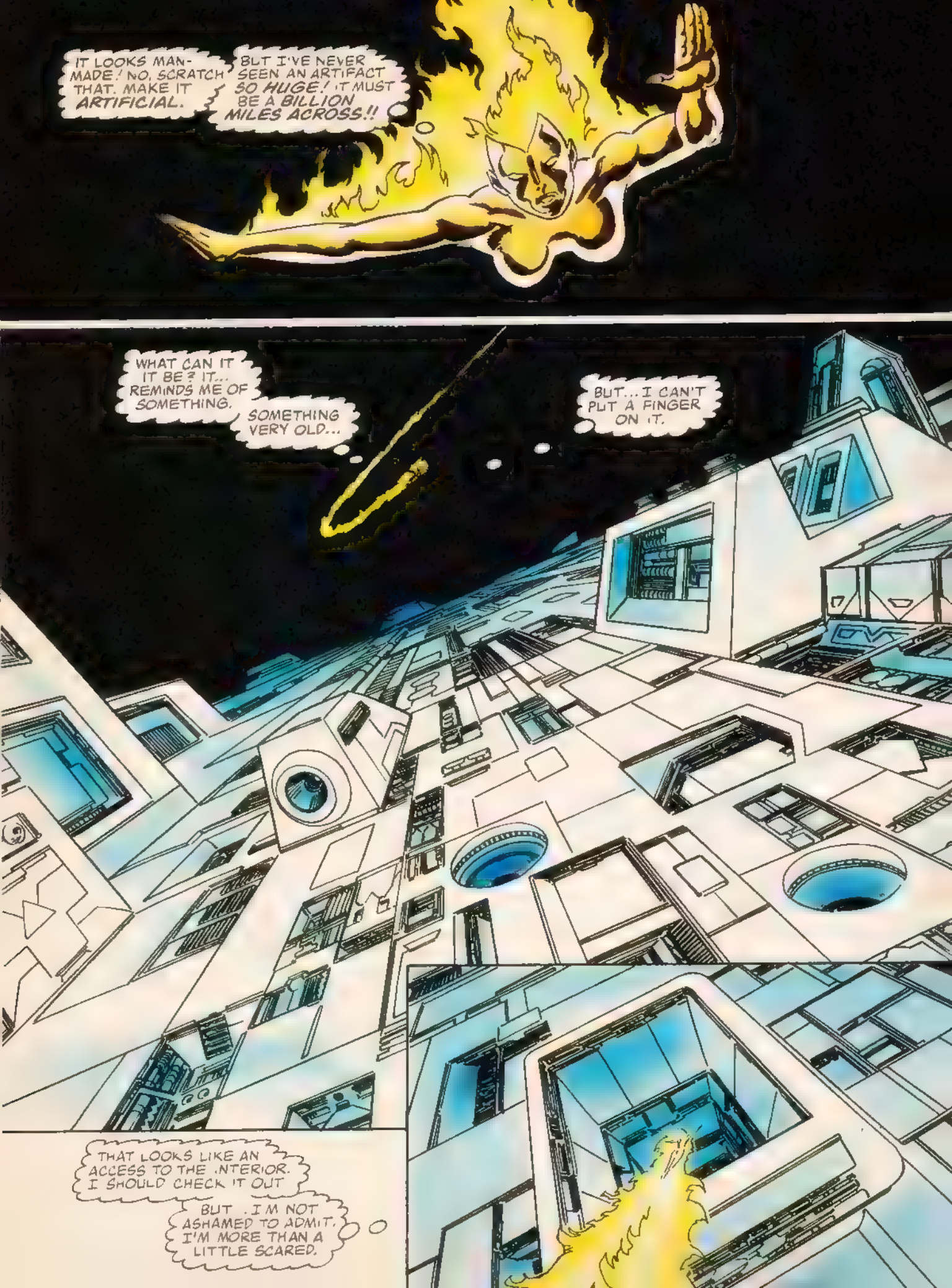
IT IS HIM!
IT IS THE GREAT DEVOURER!
FLEE! FLEE!
Q'PAK WAS RIGHT! IT IS THE END OF THE WORLD!!
THERE IS NO ESCAPE! NO ESCAPE!
A MOMENT, SMALL MORTAL.
YOU HAVE THE LOOK ABOUT YOU OF ONE WHO IS POSSESSED OF KNOWLEDGE.
PERHAPS EVEN SOME SMALL FRAGMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE I SEEK.
SPEAK TO ME, SMALL ONE. TELL ME WHAT IS KNOWN OF THIS GREAT WEB OF STARS.
THE DEVOURER ASKS ME FOR KNOWLEDGE? IS NOT THE DEVOURER KNOWLEDGE INCARNATE?
HAS NOT THE DEVOURER DRUNK DEEP OF THE LIVES OF A BILLION, BILLION WORLDS, OVER A BILLION BILLION LIFETIMES?
ARE WE NOT HERE, SO FAR FROM THE STARS OF HOME, BECAUSE OF THE DEVOURER?
EXPLAIN.

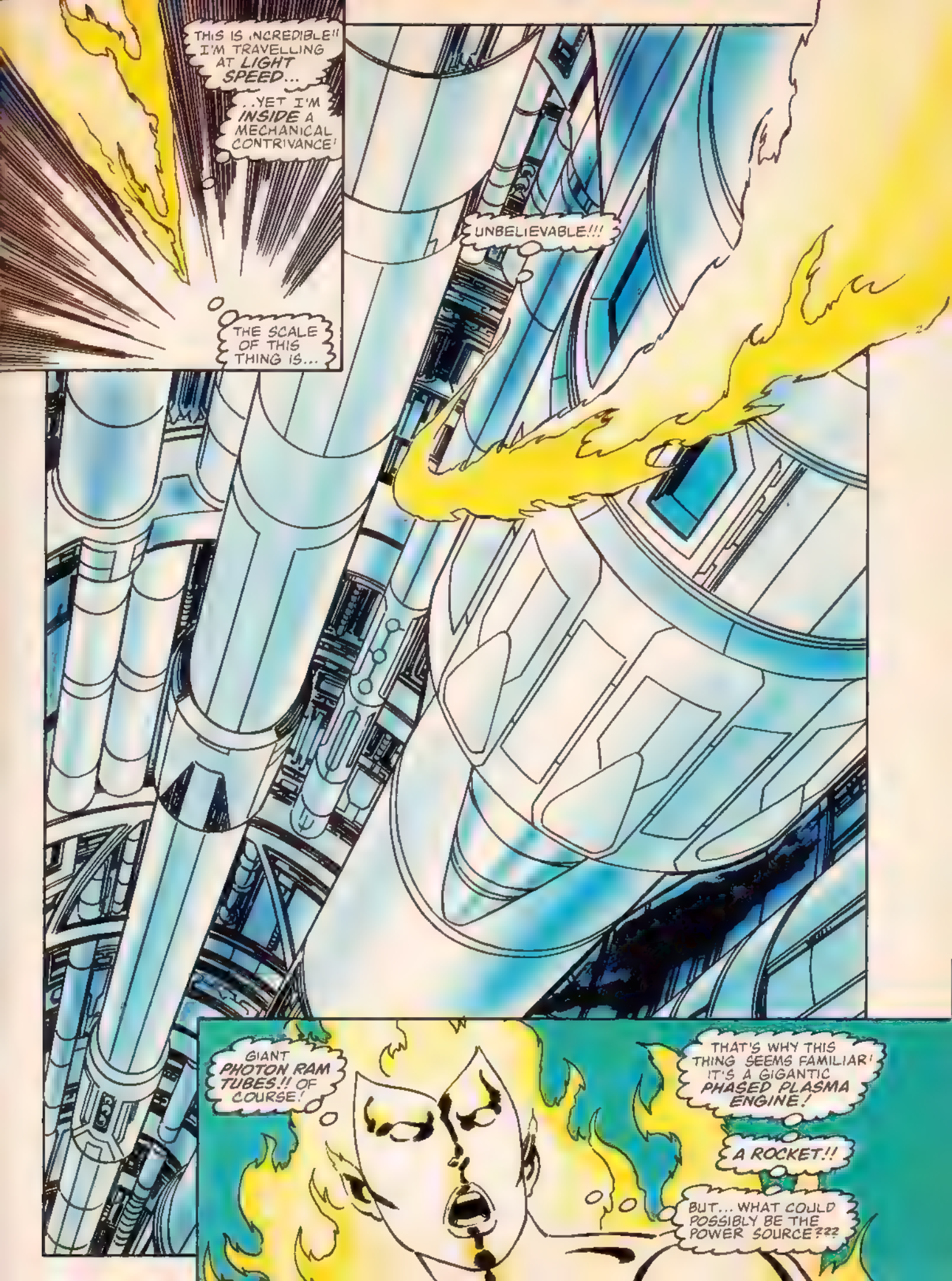

"DO YOU MOCK ME, DEVOURER? YOU, WHO ARE ALL-KNOWING, PRETEND IGNORANCE OF OUR ANCIENT LEGENDS, OUR TALES OF A ONCE MIGHTY AND PROUD CIVILIZATION.
"ONE DAY SHATTERED LIKE THE CRYSTAL BLOSSOMS OF THE AERDNA TREE, AS THE SUN GREW SUDDENLY DISTANT IN THE SKY.
"AS A DEEP AND CHILLING NIGHT FELL ACROSS ALL THE WORLD.
"UNTIL, WITHOUT WARNING, SIX NEW SUNS APPEARED, BRINGING WARMTH, AND A STRANGE, CONSTANT DAY.
"ACROSS OUR SKIES THEY TURNED, AND BEYOND THEM, DIMLY, THE ONCE FAMILIAR STARS SHIFTED IN THEIR ETERNAL PATHS.
"ONLY OUR WISEST ELDERS DARED SPEAK THE TRUTH THEY GUESSED. OUR PLANET WAS BEING MOVED!!"

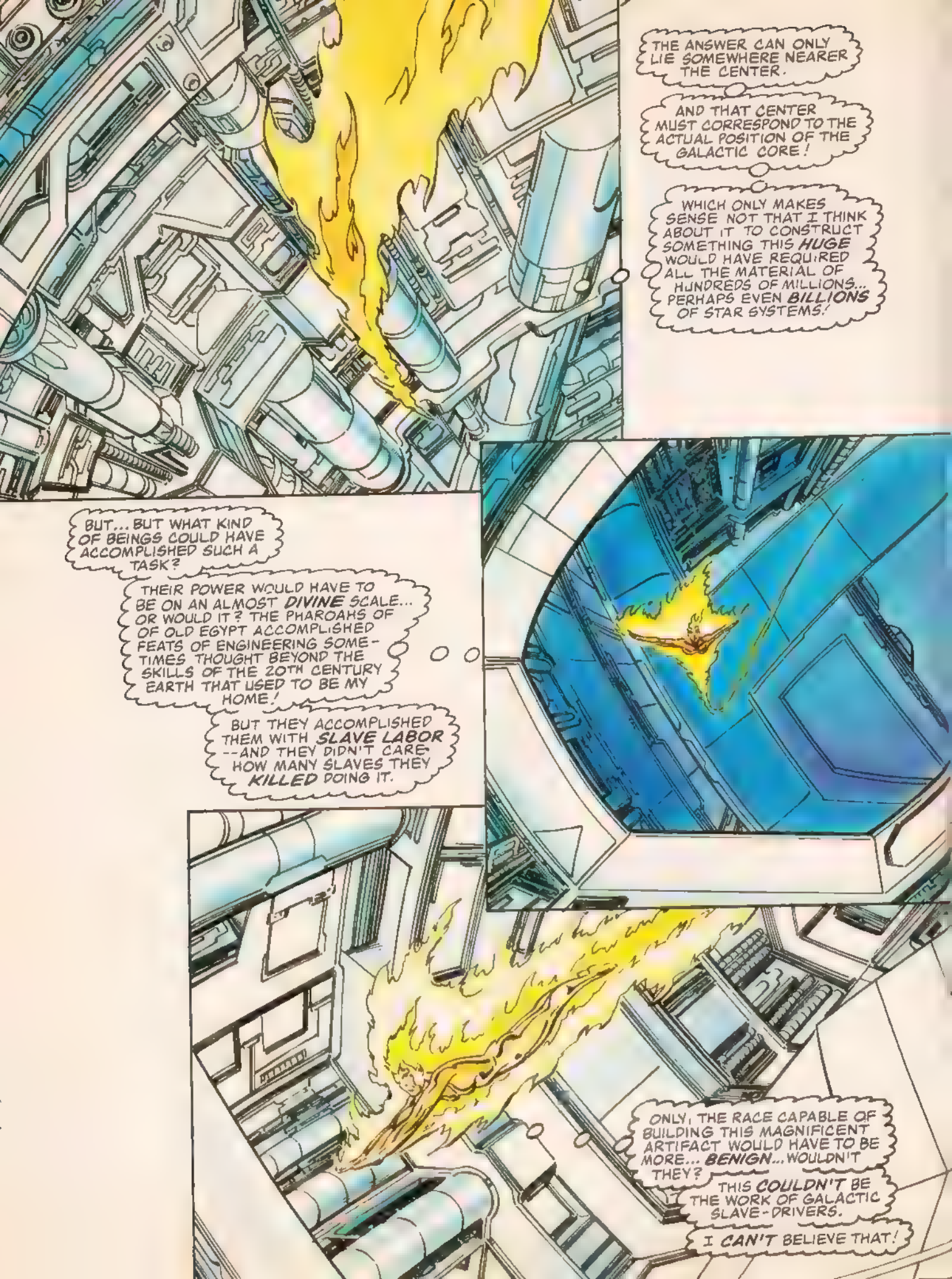
YOUR WORDS HAVE THE SOUND OF TRUTH IN THEM, SMALL ONE. HOW ELSE COULD ONE FROM SO PRIMITIVE A CULTURE EVEN BEGIN TO GUESS AT SUCH CONCEPTS.
BUT, MY GREATEST QUESTION REMAINS UNANSWERED. WHY DO YOU SAY I AM THE REASON FOR THIS STRANGE MIGRATION?
BECAUSE YOU ARE THE DEVOURER.
AND IT IS TOLD IN OUR MOST ANCIENT LEGENDS THAT OUR TREK ACROSS THE GALAXY WAS, IN SOME WAY, PART OF A GREAT PLAN TO SAVE US FROM YOUR HUNGERS.
THE PLAN OF THE ONE WHO DWELLS IN DARKNESS.
DARKNESS? AND WHERE, IN THIS BRIGHT TUNNEL OF STARS, MIGHT ANY PLACE BE CALLED DARK?
THE LEGENDS DO NOT NAME THE WORLD, DEVOURER. ONLY THAT IT IS A PLACE OF UNENDING BLACKNESS, WITH A HUNGER TO MATCH YOUR OWN.
AH! AT LAST! THERE IS SENSE TO YOUR WORDS!
NOVA!

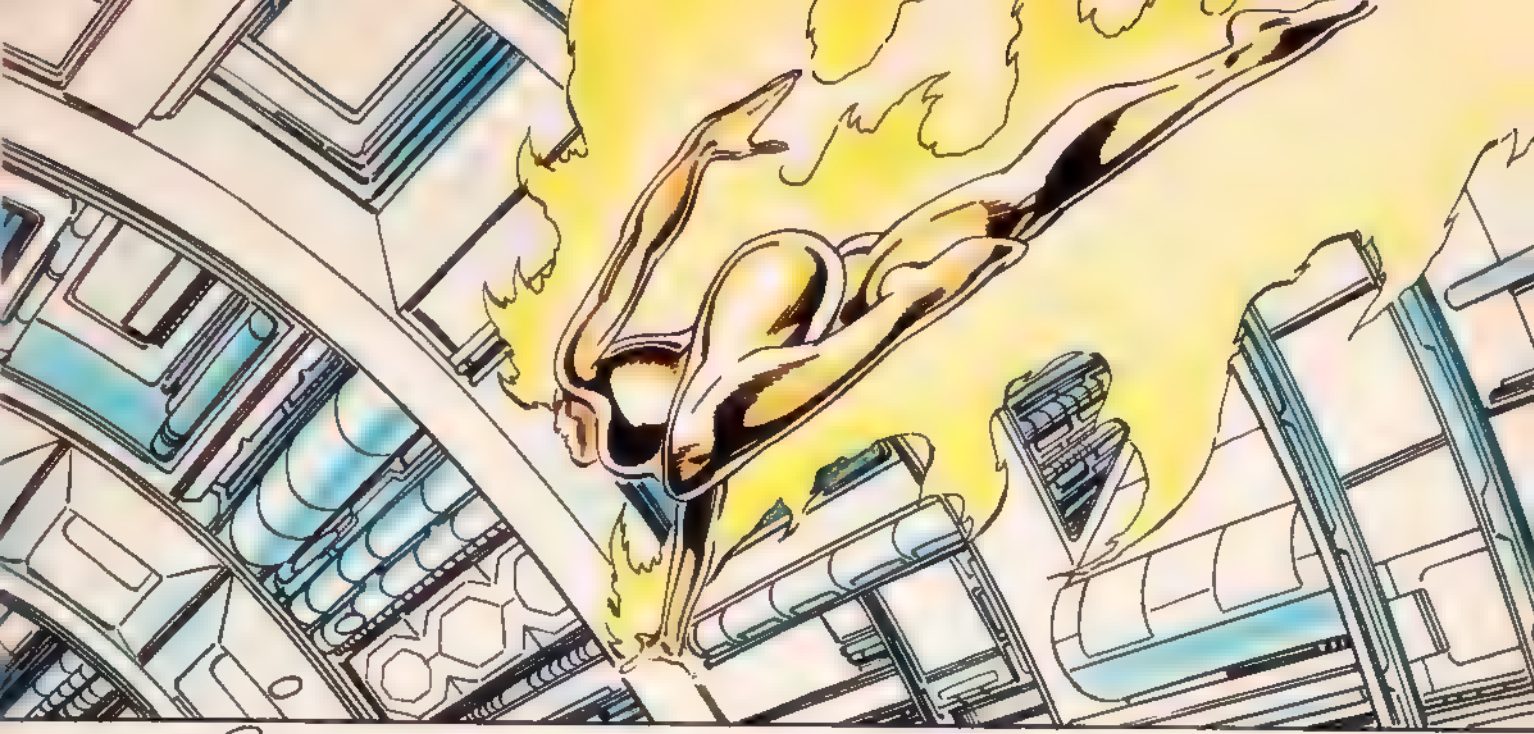

NOVA!
NOVA!
NOVA!
NOVA!
NOVA
NOVA
HE DOES NOT SPEAK ALOUD, BUT THE SINGLE WORD SEEMS TO REVERBERATE ACROSS THE COSMOS...
...UNTIL, A THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS ACROSS THE VOID IT TOUCHES OTHER MINDS...
MASTER?
YES. COME TO ME, MY LOYAL HERALD. MEET ME AT THE GALACTIC CORE.
AND HAVE A CARE, NOVA. I SENSE GREAT DANGER THERE
'TIS PASSING STRANGE!
FROM OUT THE BLACK UNYIELDING NIGHT, AS IF ON ANGEL'S WINGS, WORDS, LIKE DROPS OF RAIN THAT SHAKE THE LEAVES OF SUMMER'S BONNET...
TOUCHING UPON THESE THOUGHTS AND ANCIENT MEMORIES WHICH, IN THE HOLLOW CIRCLE OF MY HEAD...
CAN IT, SHAKESPEARE!
THAT WAS GALACTUS. HE NEEDS ME.
AND I MUST GO WHEREVER HE COMMANDS.


THE STARS SEEM TO BE THINNING OUT.
IT'S THE WALL OF DUST GALACTUS PENETRATED.
WHATEVER IS AT THE HEART OF THIS MYSTERY MUST LIE BEYOND.
BUT... GALACTUS HIMSELF ISN'T AT THE CORE YET I SENSE HIM OFF SOME WAYS, IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF THE GALACTIC LENS.
INTO THE SWIRLING BLACKNESS SHE PLUNGES...
AND DEEP WITHIN HER BREAST SOMETHING THAT MIGHT ONCE HAVE BEEN A HUMAN SOUL TREMBLES...
AND IS SUDDENLY TRANSFIXED!
WHAT IN...?!?


IT LOOKS MAN-MADE! NO, SCRATCH THAT. MAKE IT ARTIFICIAL.
BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN AN ARTIFACT SO HUGE! IT MUST BE A BILLION MILES ACROSS!!
WHAT CAN IT IT BE? IT... REMINDS ME OF SOMETHING.
SOMETHING VERY OLD...
BUT... I CAN'T PUT A FINGER ON IT.
THAT LOOKS LIKE AN ACCESS TO THE INTERIOR. I SHOULD CHECK IT OUT
BUT I'M NOT ASHAMED TO ADMIT, I'M MORE THAN A LITTLE SCARED.

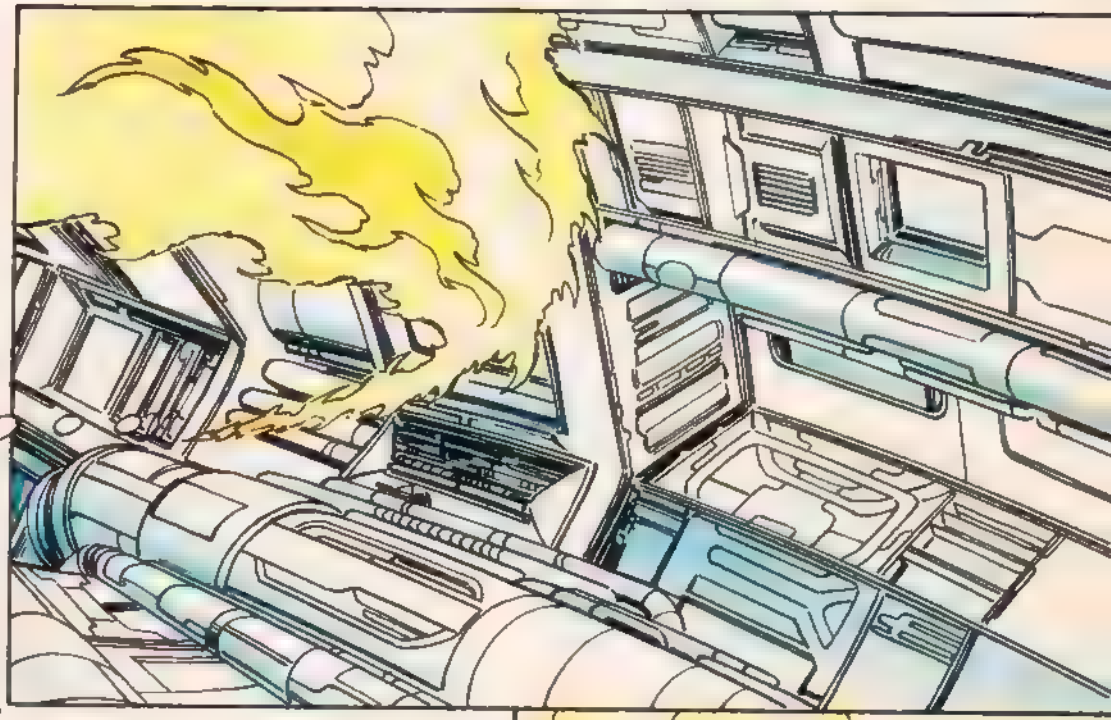

THIS IS INCREDIBLE!! I'M TRAVELLING AT LIGHT SPEED...
..YET I'M INSIDE A MECHANICAL CONTRIVANCE!
THE SCALE OF THIS THING IS...
UNBELIEVABLE!!!
GIANT PHOTON RAM TUBES!! OF COURSE!
THAT'S WHY THIS THING SEEMS FAMILIAR! IT'S A GIGANTIC PHASED PLASMA ENGINE!
A ROCKET!!
BUT... WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE THE POWER SOURCE???


THE ANSWER CAN ONLY LIE SOMEWHERE NEARER THE CENTER.
AND THAT CENTER MUST CORRESPOND TO THE ACTUAL POSITION OF THE GALACTIC CORE!
WHICH ONLY MAKES SENSE NOT THAT I THINK ABOUT IT TO CONSTRUCT SOMETHING THIS HUGE WOULD HAVE REQUIRED ALL THE MATERIAL OF HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS... PERHAPS EVEN BILLIONS OF STAR SYSTEMS!
BUT... BUT WHAT KIND OF BEINGS COULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SUCH A TASK?
THEIR POWER WOULD HAVE TO BE ON AN ALMOST DIVINE SCALE... OR WOULD IT? THE PHAROAHS OF OF OLD EGYPT ACCOMPLISHED FEATS OF ENGINEERING SOMETIMES THOUGHT BEYOND THE SKILLS OF THE 20TH CENTURY EARTH THAT USED TO BE MY HOME!
BUT THEY ACCOMPLISHED THEM WITH SLAVE LABOR --AND THEY DIDN'T CARE HOW MANY SLAVES THEY KILLED DOING IT.
ONLY, THE RACE CAPABLE OF BUILDING THIS MAGNIFICENT ARTIFACT WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE... BENIGN... WOULDN'T THEY?
THIS COULDN'T BE THE WORK OF GALACTIC SLAVE-DRIVERS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT!



IF THEY **WERE** SO CONTEMPTIBLE, WE'D SURELY HAVE **ENCOUNTERED** THEM BY NOW. BEINGS OF SUCH **POWER**, WITH SUCH LOW MORAL STANDARDS, WOULD HAVE NO REASON TO STAY OUT OF THE SIGHT OF GALACTUS.

OF COURSE... THERE ARE SOME WHO WOULD SUGGEST THAT GALACTUS HIMSELF IS HARDLY BEYOND REPROACH. HE'S INDIRECTLY SLAUGHTERED TRILLIONS OF LIFE-FORMS, ANNIHILATED ENTIRE RACES.



YET, I BELIEVE AS I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED. THAT THERE IS **MORE** TO HIM THAN JUST COSMIC **BUTCHERY**. I...

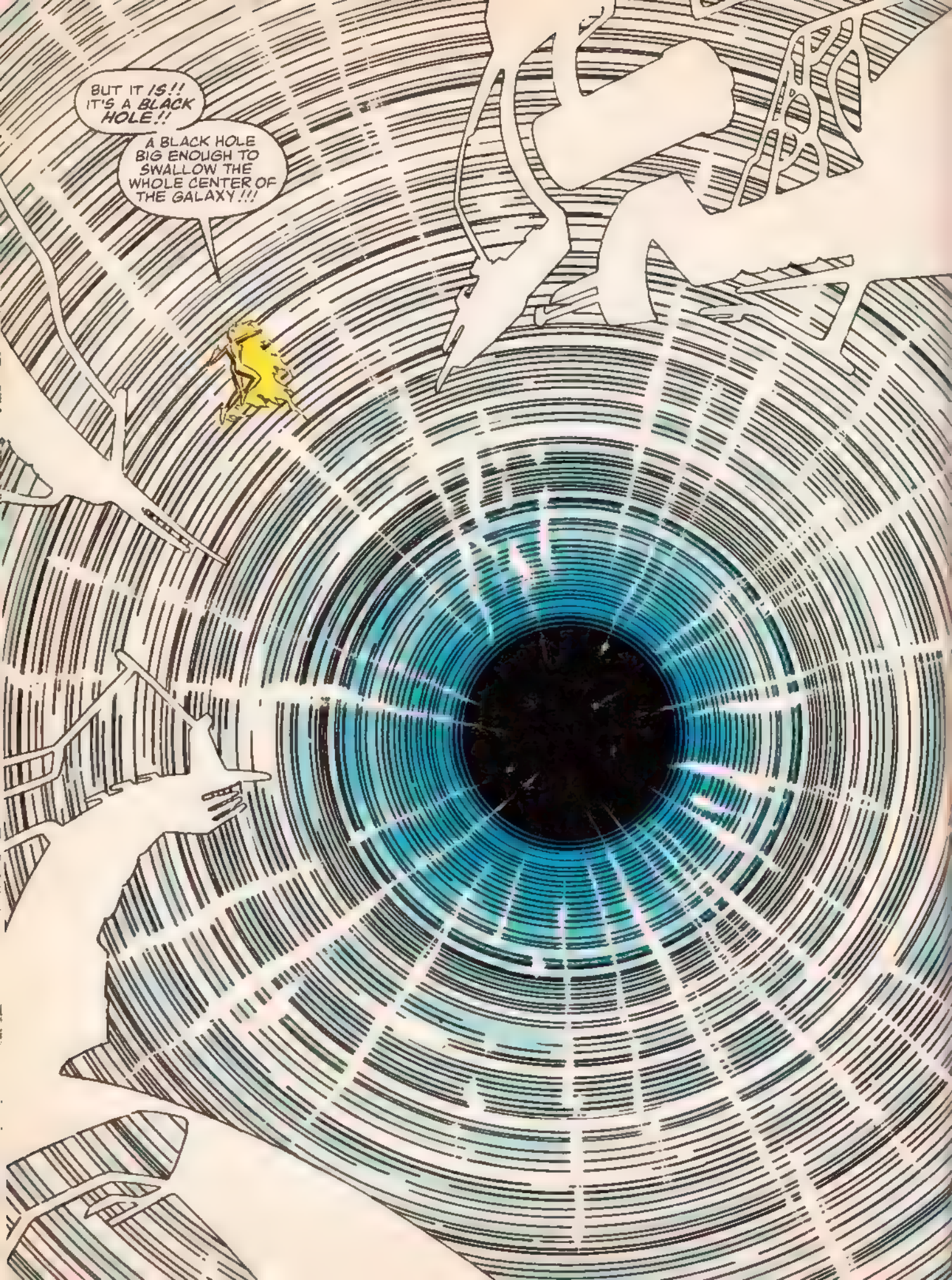
WAIT A MINUTE...

SOMETHING IS AFFECTING MY SUB-SPACE NAVIGATIONAL SENSE. SOME VAST POCKET OF **NEGATIVE FORCE** AHEAD OF ME.

IT'S GETTING **STRONGER!** IT MUST BE THE MOST POWERFUL N-FIELD I'VE EVER...

OH... MY... SWEET...

IT CAN'T BE!!


BUT IT IS!! IT'S A BLACK HOLE!!
A BLACK HOLE BIG ENOUGH TO SWALLOW THE WHOLE CENTER OF THE GALAXY!!!

DR. WATCHSTOP

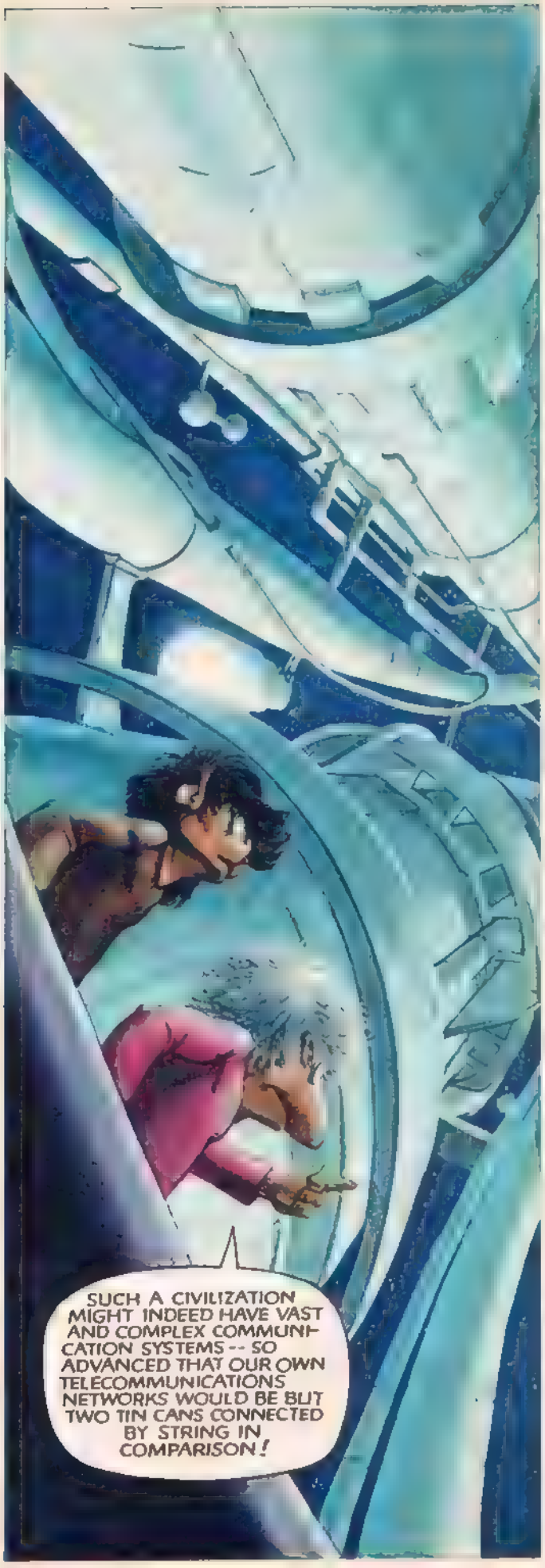
IN

"REACHING OUT"

THEN IT'S TRUE, PROFESSOR... YOU'VE RECEIVED COHERENT SIGNALS FROM THE SIRIAN STAR SYSTEM!
MORE THAN JUST COHERENT SIGNALS! THE TIME AND DIRECTION CAN BE NO COINCIDENCE! I'M CERTAIN IT'S A REPLY TO OUR TRANSMISSIONS SEEKING ANOTHER INTELLIGENT RACE!
AT LAST-- WE HAVE CRIED HELLO TO THE STARS AND THEY ARE ANSWERING!
OF COURSE, THE SIGNAL IS IN BINARY CODE. I'VE FINISHED PROGRAMMING THE DATA INTO THE COMPUTER AND WE SHOULD HAVE THE MESSAGE PROMPTLY!

© 1985 Ken Macklin

BUT, PROFESSOR, CAN YOU BE SURE IT'S NOT JUST A RANDOM (THOUGH INTELLIGENT) BROADCAST? ARE YOU CERTAIN THEY'VE RECEIVED OUR SIGNAL?
OF COURSE, MY LAD! ANY TECHNOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION CAPABLE OF SUCH A TRANS-MISSION COULD NOT POSSIBLY IGNORE SUCH A UNIVERSAL GREETING FROM THE STARS, A HAILING FROM A NEIGHBORING WORLD!

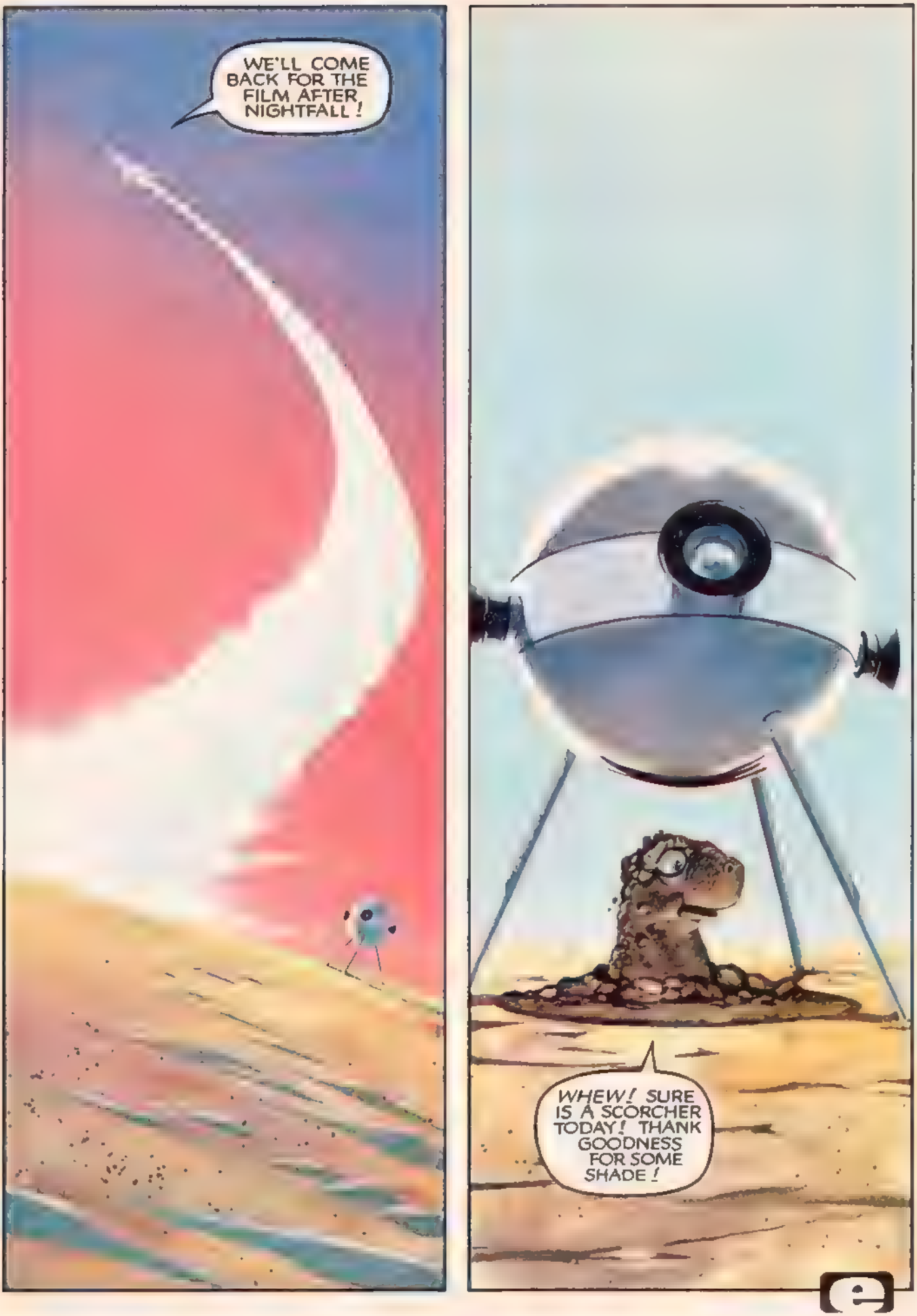

SUCH A CIVILIZATION MIGHT INDEED HAVE VAST AND COMPLEX COMMUNI-CATION SYSTEMS -- SO ADVANCED THAT OUR OWN TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS WOULD BE BUT TWO TIN CANS CONNECTED BY STRING IN COMPARISON!

SUCH ADVANCED BEINGS COULD NOT FAIL TO RECEIVE SO SIMPLE AND BASIC A MESSAGE AS OURS!!
PROFESSOR! WE'RE GETTING A TRANSLATION FROM OUR COMPUTER!
WHAT DOES IT SAY?!
"WE'RE SORRY, BUT YOUR CALL CANNOT BE COMPLETED AS DIALED... PLEASE CHECK YOUR LOCAL DIRECTORY."

DR. WATCHSTOP
IN
"BEATING THE HEAT"
BRING THE REST OF THE EQUIP-MENT!
HURRY! THE PLANET'S SUN IS RISING AND WE MUST GET SET UP BEFORE THE HEAT BECOMES TOO MUCH FOR OUR COOLING SYSTEMS!
NO SIGN OF LIFE HERE, DOCTOR.

© 1985 Ken Macklin

IN SPITE OF THE HIGH HEAT HERE, I'M CONVINCED THAT A RARE BURROWING LIFE FORM CAN AND DOES EMERGE DURING THE DAYLIGHT!
WE CAN'T STICK AROUND TO FIND OUT, DOCTOR, THE TEMPERATURE IS ALREADY 321° KELVIN AND CLIMBING!
NO, WE CAN'T STAY, BUT THIS SPECIAL CAMERA POD CAN! ITS LENSES ARE MOUNTED ON A TURRET THAT SCANS THE HORIZON FOR 360°! IF ANYTHING MOVES IN ITS FIELD OF VIEW, IT'LL RECORD IT ON FILM!


WE'LL COME BACK FOR THE FILM AFTER NIGHTFALL!
WHEW! SURE IS A SCORCHER TODAY! THANK GOODNESS FOR SOME SHADE!

PORTFOLIO

THE ELEMENTS • TIM CONRAD

In addition to the various series, short stories, and covers that he has contributed to Epic Illustrated, *artist/writer Tim Conrad has also produced a number of fine art portfolios. His latest takes as its theme the four elements—Air, Fire, Earth, and Water—and draws from mythological and symbolic expressions originating with the ancient Greeks.*

© 1983 • 1985 T.A. *Conrad*

Shown on the opening page is Air, represented by Iris, goddess of the rainbow and the wind, who is symbolic of all those forces in life that we cannot touch or feel or rationalize. Athena, portrayed above, was the Greek goddess of wisdom and is used by Conrad to represent Fire, which in the Grecian symbolic cosmology stood for the energy of the intellect.

The quintessential Greek goddess of Earth was Gaia, from whose name we derive the words geology and geography. She represents the concrete forms and aspects of reality. The next page portrays Water—symbolic of life's subtle, emotional aspects—as The Sirens, who represent the strengths and hazards of our emotional natures, from purest love to darkest hate.

Each of the four plates which make up The Elements *are printed in a 12 inch by 12 inch format. The portfolio is a limited edition of 2000 copies and each has been signed and numbered by the artist. It was published by Mr. Conrad's own company,* JUDE *publication, c/o Tim Conrad, 2206 Westchester, Apt. #5, Springfield, Illinois 62704; all inquiries about* The Elements *should be made at that address.*

In a time past, [illegible] Queen longed for a child. Their despair [illegible] Years came [illegible] walked, but [illegible] no baby.

Walking under [illegible] heavy with deeply colored leaves, the Queen crossed paths with a frog. He delivered to her a message.

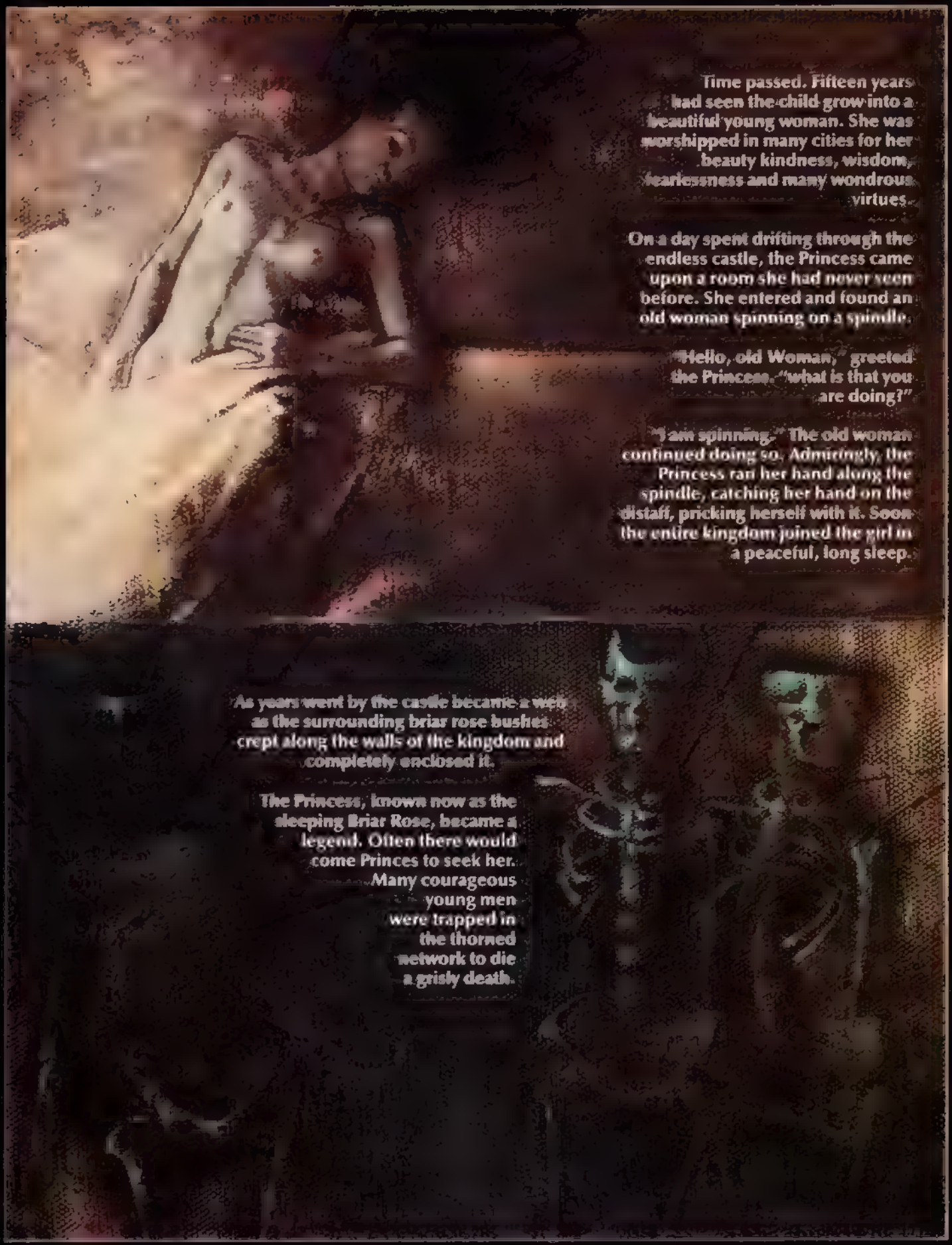
"Your wish shall be fulfilled. The next harvest will bring you your first child."

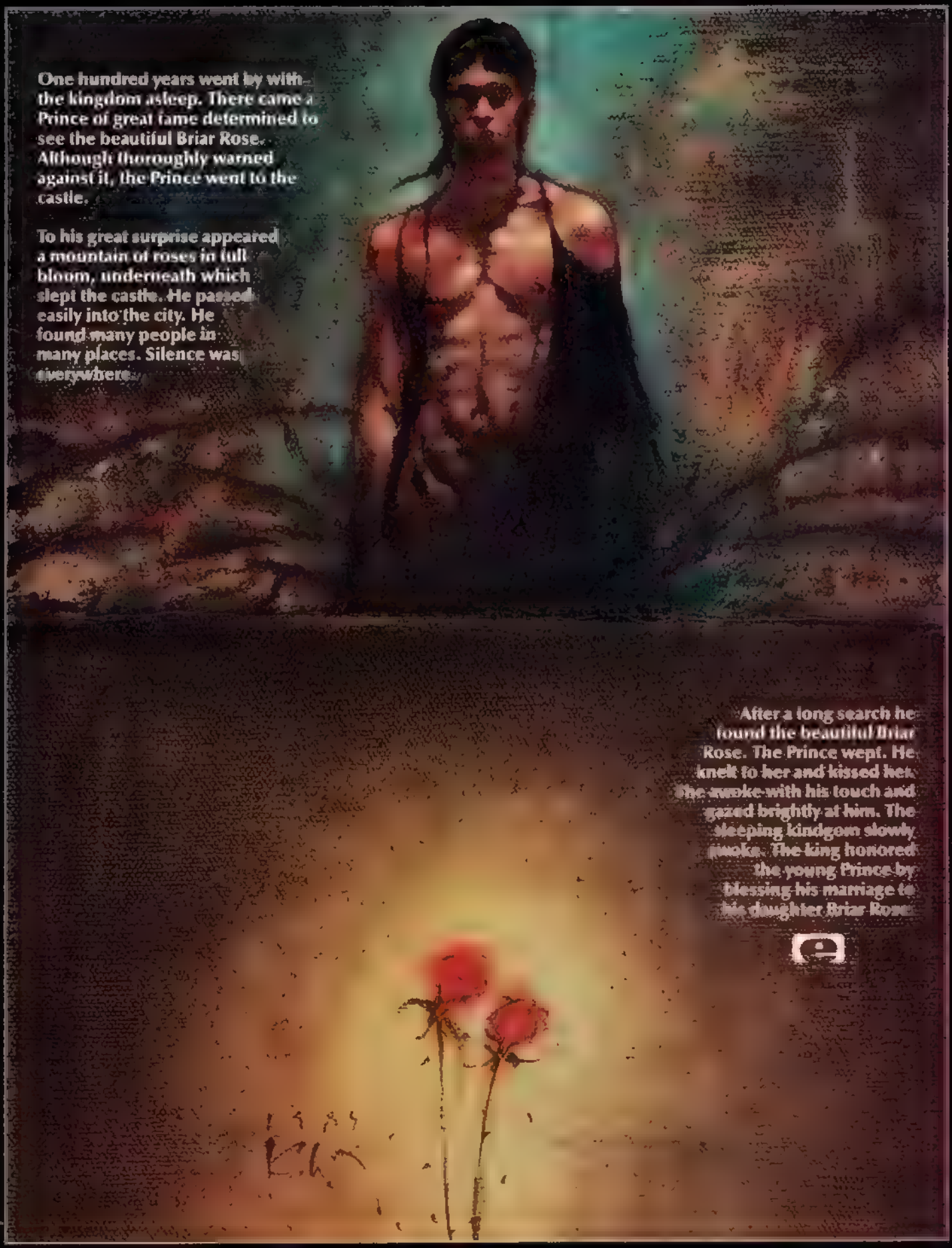
Joyously the Queen grew round with child. When the leaves once again turned colors, the child, a girl, was born. The King, greatly pleased, offered a great feast in her honor. Family, friends and all whom he favored were asked to attend, including the wondrous fairies. Although there were thirteen, only twelve were invited, as the King only owned twelve golden plates off which they would eat.

Frog Face

Story by The Brothers Grimm
artwork © 1985 Kent Williams/adaptation © 1985 Lynn Parrish

The festivities delighted one and all. The evening glittered. The meal was generous. The fairies each bestowed fine gifts upon the Princess: virtue, kindness, beauty, so that she would be a worthy daughter.
During the speech of the eleventh fairie came an interruption. The thirteenth fairie, uninvited to the celebration, came to hurl a curse at the baby.
"The Princess shall prick herself with a distaff in her fifteenth year and die from it."
Aghast yet unable to remove the dreadful curse, the twelfth fairie revised the decree.
"The child shall not die. Instead she will sleep for one hundred years."
The King ordered all distaffs destroyed and banned them from the kingdom.


Time passed. Fifteen years had seen the child grow into a beautiful young woman. She was worshipped in many cities for her beauty kindness, wisdom, fearlessness and many wondrous virtues.
On a day spent drifting through the endless castle, the Princess came upon a room she had never seen before. She entered and found an old woman spinning on a spindle.
"Hello, old Woman," greeted the Princess. "what is that you are doing?"
"I am spinning." The old woman continued doing so. Admiringly, the Princess ran her hand along the spindle, catching her hand on the distaff, pricking herself with it. Soon the entire kingdom joined the girl in a peaceful, long sleep.
As years went by the castle became a web as the surrounding briar rose bushes crept along the walls of the kingdom and completely enclosed it.
The Princess, known now as the sleeping Briar Rose, became a legend. Often there would come Princes to seek her. Many courageous young men were trapped in the thorned network to die a grisly death.


One hundred years went by with the kingdom asleep. There came a Prince of great fame determined to see the beautiful Briar Rose. Although thoroughly warned against it, the Prince went to the castle.
To his great surprise appeared a mountain of roses in full bloom, underneath which slept the castle. He passed easily into the city. He found many people in many places. Silence was everywhere.
After a long search he found the beautiful Briar Rose. The Prince wept. He knelt to her and kissed her. She awoke with his touch and gazed brightly at him. The sleeping kingdom slowly awoke. The king honored the young Prince by blessing his marriage to his daughter Briar Rose.

FEEDBACK

letters & comments

Dear Stan and Archie,

Though I usually refrain from writing letters to save you from having to read "fan-gibberish", I felt I had to write you this time. I have heard rumors, and I hope they are only rumors, that **Epic Illustrated** is being cancelled. To me, this is an outrage. I have been a reader of **Epic** since the first issue and have grown attached to it. Silly as it may seem I feel toward **Epic** as I do toward my son. I have seen him grow from infancy, saw him learn and achieve proper footing so he may walk his own. I have fed him, cared for him and supported him in his hour of need. And now I hear that he is to be killed?!!!

Archie, I am sure you understand how I feel, having read that you, too, have a son of your own.

If **Epic** does get cancelled it will mean that a certain part of my life has left and there will be a certain emptiness I will feel until that day when I must depart from everything also. Although **Epic** is only a few years old I feel that it has been with me my entire life. I grew up with **Vaughn Bodé's** work and **Epic** has helped ease some of the pain of his death. It's such a pleasure to see **Mark's** work! It brought back memories of those good ol' times! I'll make it short. You know **Epic** means a hell of a lot to me, and I'm sure a lot to many people. Don't cancel **Epic**. Please.

Buck A. Neer
New York, NY

We're sorry, *Buck*, but the fate of *Epic Illustrated* is both sealed and out of our hands. We're pretty depressed about losing our first-born, too, but the rest of the family is thriving. Thanks for the swell vote of confidence.

Dear Stan and Archie,

Epic #31 was, all in all, a fine issue. I thoroughly enjoyed **The Seed and the Sower** (alas, more for the art than the story, I fear) and **Archie's** own **Beyond Legend** was nice, too. Was **Paty Cockrum's The Sword of Sh'rlii** a tribute (or, perhaps, a parody) of **Wendy** and **Richard Pini's Elfquest**? The art, characters, and even bits of the story reminded me of the **Pinis'** excellent comics saga. As for **Toadswart**, at least now I can what is going on. The first couple of chapters really didn't reproduce well, unfortunately. **The Last Galactus Story** was okay, too...what there was of it (just kidding). I am very much looking forward to the **Cerebus Portfolio** promised for next issue. I am a big fan of both **Dave Sim** and **Gerhard**, and I had the pleasure of meeting them a few weeks ago (even got a beautiful colored sketch of Cerebus too!). Keep these Cerebus appearances coming!

I would like to conclude this missive with a few little suggestions. First of all, would it be possible to put the number of the issue on the cover? Speaking of numbers and such, why don't you number the pages? I know some are, but the majority are not. Haven't you heard of pagination? It would certainly help us, your faithful readers, to locate specific articles and stories. Finally, please do keep **Denny O'Neil** around. I don't always agree with his **Mediaview** columns, but I certainly respect his opinions. Thanks.

Conrad P. Felber

And about a week later came *Conrad's* second letter.

Dear Archie,

Golly gee whiz, thanks for deciding to cancel **Epic**. How much more exciting, original art and bold, adult stories could I take?!? On behalf of fans of fine comics everywhere, I say "way to go". One more issue of excellence, and I know I'd be checking into the local rubber room.

Conrad P. Felber
Sudbury, Ontario
Canada

Ouch!

Dear Stan and Archie,

I just heard that **Epic Illustrated** is coming to a conclusion. I can guess why. The amount of man-hours that goes into producing one issue of **Epic** would yield twice as many returns if spent on peddling out some bullshit superdude comic. **Epic** has always advocated rare treats of innovative and thoughtful literature. In the end it is we readers who pay the toll for your business decisions. Thank you for the splendid issues to date. They were many.

Jim Chapman
Ville Platte, LA

***Jim's* letter is both a cogent and accurate summary of the factors that underlay our cancellation. *Jim* has also been one of our longtime readers—getting a letter like his is like hearing from an old friend. Thanks, *Jim*.**

Dear Stan and Archie,

I've been following Epic since **The Last Galactus Story** began. I, like other readers, wonder about the Silver Surfer. If he's not dead, wouldn't he be insane after 100 million years of being imprisoned on earth? If he is alive and insane wouldn't he attack Galactus? No matter, I think **Byrne** and **Austin** are doing classic works. I have long been a Galactus fan and think he's never looked better. By the way, who first named and created Galactus?

When I first began to read **Epic**, I only hoped for a great Galactus story, but I found more. The variety and quality in this book are fantastic. My favorite stories are those I've seen in issue 29, 30 and 31 by **Kent Williams**. I loved **The Seed and the Sower** work in ish #31, but my favorite was **Night Run** in issue #29. His watercolors were wonderful, and the woman in **Night Run** was beautiful. I hope to see more **Williams** in the future.

Edward A. Johnson Jr.
Tampa, FL

(continues on page 98)

BE A LOCKSMITH

You'll EARN MORE, LIVE BETTER Than Ever Before in Your Life

You'll enjoy your work as a Locksmith because it is more fascinating than a hobby and highly paid besides! You'll go on enjoying the fascinating work, year after year, in good times or bad because you'll be the man in demand in an ever-growing field offering big pay jobs, big profits as your own boss. What more could you ask?

I have already master keyed my Elks Lodge and 38 apartments so you see my locksmith course is practically paid for!
Ademondo Orsi, Jr.
Azusa, Calif.

Train at Home Earn Extra $$$ Right Away!

All this can be yours FAST regardless of age, education, minor physical handicaps. Job enjoyment and earnings begin AT ONCE as you quickly, easily learn to CASH IN on all kinds of locksmithing jobs. A keys, locks, parts, picks, special tools and equipment come with the course at no extra charge. Licensed experts guide you at every step.

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Locksmithing establishes graduates now earning, enjoying life more everywhere. You can too. Coupon brings exciting facts from the school approved by N.Y. State Department of Education.

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Please send FREE illustrated booklet. Your Opportunities in Locksmithing, plus sample lesson pages. I understand there is no obligation and no salesman will call.

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City, State, Zip

TOADSWART

SYNOPSIS

In the year 982 A.D., the dwarf Toadswart, retainer of Castle Amplestone, finds his world stalked by Horror.

It began with the mysterious disappearance of the castle's old Lord. This affected his heir, Prince Waxwroth. Suspecting the King of the realm of designs upon Amplestone province, Waxwroth evoked Dark Forces to give life to a hideous creation... the Golem.

Then, the King's army suddenly arrived, proof to Waxwroth that someone had betrayed him. Soon, Waxwroth's son, Rupert, plunged to his doom from the castle tower. After the boy's funeral, Waxwroth seized Lacknose, the old Lord's magician, believing him to be the spy and responsible for the tragedy. Lacknose died under torture, confessing only that he thought the Prince mad. His death moved Toadswart and others to rebellion. Waxwroth, in turn, used his sorcerous powers to unleash plague and sickness upon the already besieged Amplestone.

Allied with the artist, Shamshadow, Toadswart aided an attempt to save Rupert's mother, the Princess Adriana, and discovered by accident that the "spy" was Father Pretense, who had naively and innocently revealed Waxwroth's plans. As Shamshadow and the priest prepared to take the stricken Adriana from the castle, Toadswart tried to draw away the menacing Golem... and encountered disaster.

d'AMPLESTONE

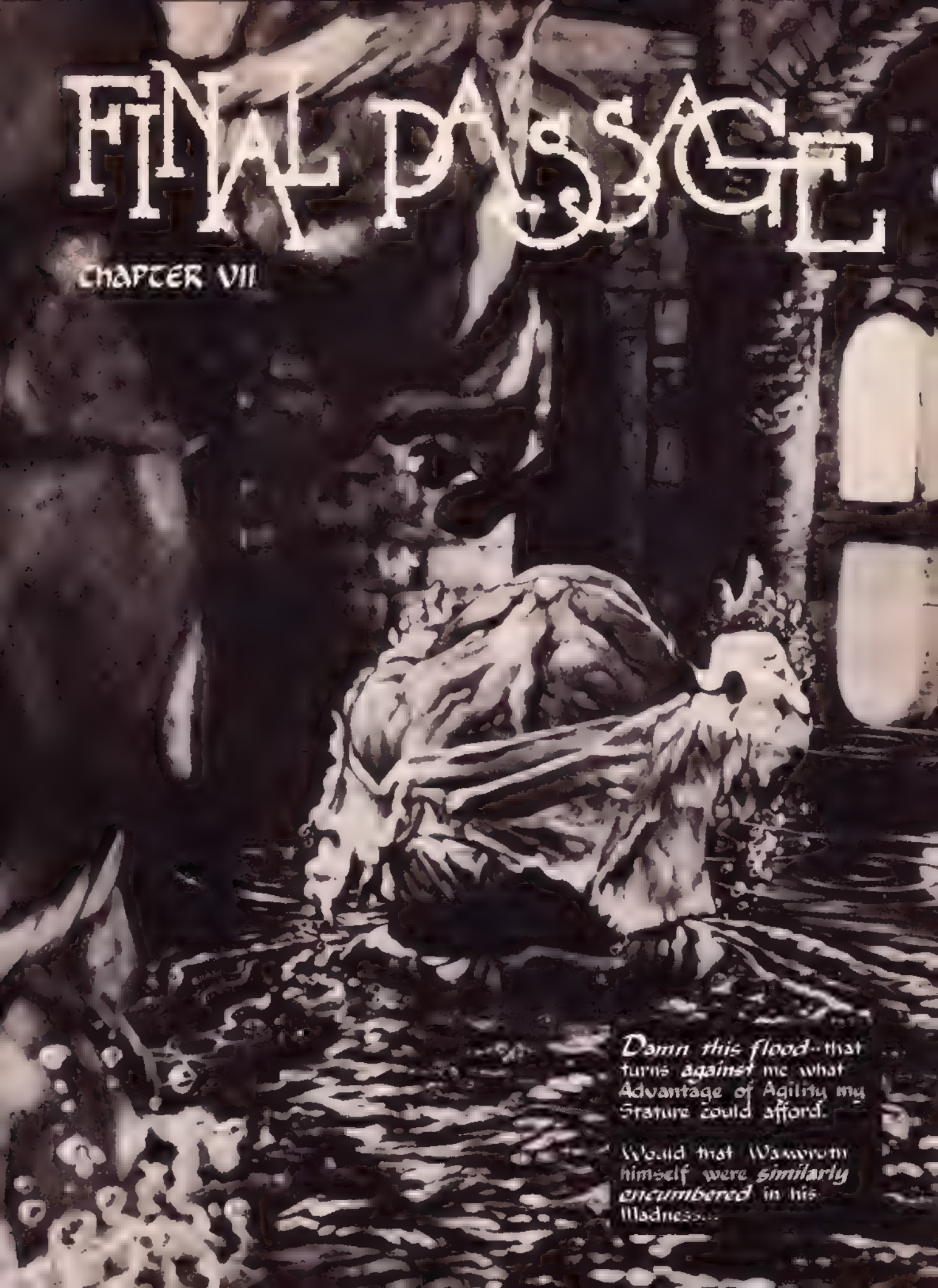
A GOTHIC TALE of HORROR & MAGICK

BY TIM A CONRAD

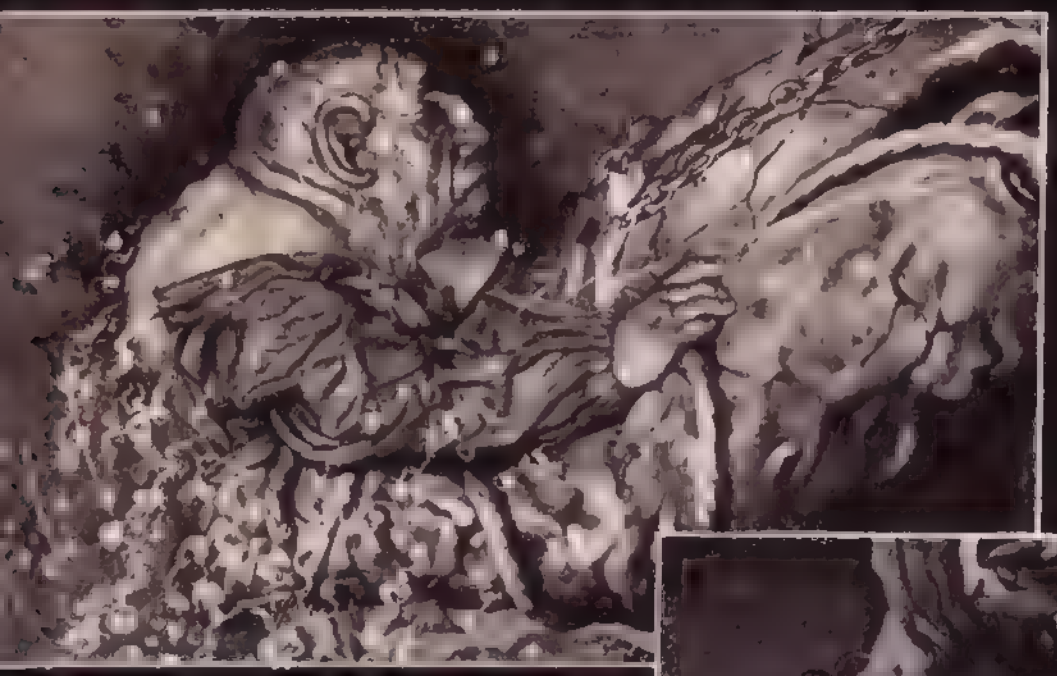
1985 Tim Conrad

FINAL PASSAGE

CHAPTER VII


Damn this flood--that turns against me what Advantage of Agility my Stature could afford.
Would that Wamphyrth himself were similarly encumbered in his Madness...

...and as
like to...
...slip!

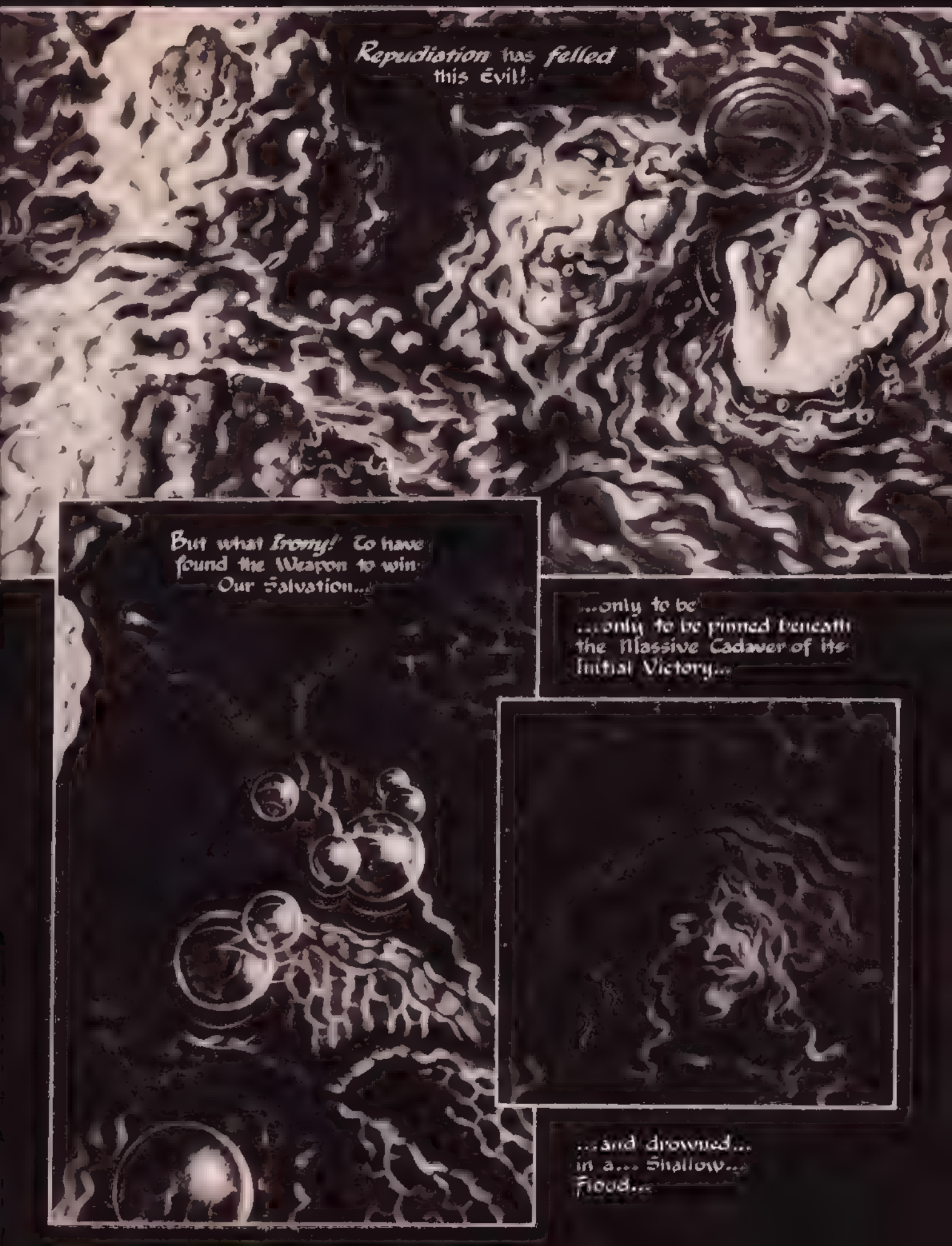


Is there no Balance, no Counterweight, to this Horror the Black Prince impels? No force to Oppose these unyielding Energies of Destruction?

Are we all, then, so Completely Impotent before the Implacable Face and Form of Evil? Totally unable to turn away its Random Gaze...

...or evade its Crushing Grip?!

But, NO! Evil is no External, Independent Quality of the World, preying on Innocent Man!
It is the Willful Expression of Selfishness, Lust and Greed! Created and Forged as deliberately as this Accursed Amulet!
TO HELL WITH SUCH INIQUITY!
?!


Repudiation has felled this Evil!
But what Irony! To have found the Weapon to win Our Salvation...
...only to be
...only to be pinned beneath the Massive Cadaver of its Initial Victory...
...and drowned... in a... Shallow... Flood...

TOADSWART! YOU BREATHE! THANK GOD!
KOFF! THE PRIN-- (CHOKE) THE PRINCESS-- KOFF! HACK! KOFF!
PREPARE TO FLY! WHEN YOU WERE NOT IN THE YARD WHERE WE BROUGHT HER, I THOUGHT IT CAUTIOUS TO SEEK YOU OUT--
--WHILE FATHER PRETENSE ARRANGED OUR TRANS-PORTATION.
DEAR LORD! WHAT HAS HAPPENED? DOES THE MONSTER COME?!

(continues on page 59)

MEDIAVIEW

by Dennis O'Neil

I used to be the guy who waited for the paperback. Now I'm the guy who waits for the cassette.

I thought of that the other day as I walked past several hundred young people equipped with radios, sleeping bags, beach chairs, picnic coolers, battery-operated televisions and even small hibachis. They were outside **Tower Records** on Lower Broadway, had been there for eighteen hours, some of them, to buy tickets for a forthcoming **Bruce Springsteen** concert. What kind of masochists are these kids, I wondered, suffering the harshness and dirt of the sidewalk, the heat of a New York July, the abuse of the neighborhood's wino-druggie-crazo population for what?—a couple of hours' entertainment? *Can't* be worth it. Me? I was at **Tower** to return a couple of taped movies I'd rented at the special Tuesday night bargain rate of two for $2.50. I'd gotten nearly four hours' amusement in the quiet and comfort of my apartment, at my own sweet convenience: no endless queue, no hassle, no swelter—no martydom of the sidewalk for *this* mother's child.

A lot of the movies I see these days are on tape, and I'm not alone. Experts say that by the end of this year there will be more than 27,000,000 video cassette recorders in use in the United States. Those same experts tell us that sales and rentals of pre-recorded movies (and other attractions, such as antique tv programs and how-to demonstrations) are expected to bring in millions of dollars. The cassette boom, if it can be called that, is having its most immediate effect on the networks. Broadcasting professionals attribute the steadily declining ratings of the three biggies, **ABC, CBS** and **NBC**, to cable stations and VCRs.

It makes sense. Regular programs, the cop shows and sitcoms, have, with a few exceptions, become routine—chewing gum for the eyes, to use **John Crosby's** phrase. Now, there are times when that's exactly what a weary citizen wants: plop down in front of the tube and numb out after a particularly tough day at the slave pit. But when the citizen wants to be entertained, to be excited or moved or engaged, a predictable car chase and an unbonny *bon mot* won't do it. A movie is called for. So should he take a trip to the theater? In many urban areas, moviegoing has become a big and costly enterprise. The citizen might be eating **Skippy** peanut butter sandwiches for a week if he chooses to bring someone with him and buy dinner for the two of them. And suppose they don't *like* the movie? Suppose it's awful? What an affront!

No, the prudent citizen will wait a few months and rent the movie. (Maybe not even a few months. I saw **John Sayles'** excellent **Brother From Another Planet** while it was still playing at the **Waverly.**) Then, if it's not to his liking, he can half watch it while talking, or petting the cat, or reading the paper, or just let it be grey noise on which to float a drifting mind. Or he can turn off the damn set and do something he enjoys. He's only out a couple of bucks. **Skippy** can stay in the jar. There are movies I'm reasonably certain I won't enjoy enough to justify the expense and trouble of a theater trek: **Runaway, Dune, Day of the Dead**, anything starring **John Candy**, almost anything starring **Chevy Chase, Goonies, Real Genius, The Bride, Weird Science, My Science Project** and **Key Exchange**, to cite a few current examples. Occasionally, of course, I'll be mistaken and see on a small screen a film I should have seen on a big screen, with **Dolby Sound** and other high tech amenities, but those errors will be infrequent.

There has been, for at least two decades, a parallel to the cassette phenomenon in book publishing. Any hardcover book that has at least a chance of finding a large readership will be available in paperback within a couple of years of its original publication date at a fraction of the hardcover cost. Instead of buying one cloth-bound novel, the avid reader buys six paperbound ones. On those rare occasions when a book really touches his life, when he knows he'll want to return to it, his bookstore can order the expensive, sturdy edition for him. And, as large paperback sales in effect subsidize small hardcover sales—the hardcover publisher counts on paperback money to offset his costs and earn a profit even if the book isn't initially successful—so do movie makers now hope cassette (and television) sales will amortize production costs. Sometimes, they do better than that; sometimes, a theater flop will be a cassette hit—for example, **Supergirl** and **Heaven's Gate.**

Results? Two, I think. The first is a change in the expectations an audience brings to a movie. Once, it was necessary for film makers (and critics) to assume that movies were a one-time-only experience; everything that was to be gotten from the movie had to be gotten immediately, at a single viewing; film was no medium for subtlety because few people outside the film industry ever saw a movie more than once or twice in a lifetime. Television began to change that in the late 40s and early 50s, when favorite flicks began showing up on the Late Show fairly frequently. Now, with cassette technology, it's possible to *own* a favorite, to savor it as often as one likes, exactly as our fathers owned and savored favorite books. People quote great chunks of **Casablanca** as they used to quote chunks of **The Great Gatsby.** We are becoming—for want of a better term—*movie literate*. Movies are replacing novels as our popular literature.

But the analogy between print and film isn't exact because print has never been pervasive. The average American television set is on between five and seven hours *a day*. This means that movies—and their stepchildren, teleplays—are either absorbing our attention or seeping into our subconscious for much of our waking lives. Something that ubiquitous isn't entertainment, it's environment. And therein lies the second result of the cassette/television revolution: more and more, movies are not things *outside*, things that, however fascinating they may be, are essentially alien; they are a part of our home lives, as familiar as the kitchen table. Earlier, I said our hypothetical citizen goes to movies when he wants to be excited or moved or engaged. I wonder: can something as familiar as the kitchen table excite, move and engage us? Are movies becoming chewing gum for the eyes, too? If that's true, what will do for us what they used to do?

We still have a need, possibly rooted in the religious impulse, to go out, to form a temporary community of friends and strangers and focus on a person or activity which enthralls us. That's why those hundreds I passed outside **Tower Records** endured the torments of their long wait. That's why, in every city in the land, people bring patience and stoicism and humor to queue, to get tickets for a performance of **Bruce Springsteen**, or **Willie Nelson**, or **Madonna**, or **Miles Davis**, or the **London Philharmonic.** Living rooms are nice, but few are the epiphanies that occur in them.

FUTUREVIEW

by John Robert Tebbel and Martha Thomases

As usual, the stereotype is a load of mostly wrong. The stage hypnotist in full **Svengali** drag, seduces a member of the audience into a trance. The subject loses all control, and becomes a slave to the hypnotist's will. The subject will scream like a chicken, fall in love, maybe even commit murder, if that is what the Master commands.

That trance stuff is scary. No one knows what it feels like. At the hypnotist's command, no one ever remembers. While you're under, you can't control yourself. We don't usually fear what we might do, but what if it's beyond our control? Who in his right mind would subject himself to this hypnosis stuff?

Guess again, true believers. There is not much cosmic about hypnosis. No mental magnetism. No power to rule others. And, while it's not the stuff of pulp stories past, it may turn out to be one of the most effective ways to control your life in the ever-more-stressful future. You can even do it to yourself in the privacy of your own home.

We're talking here about self-hypnosis. You use it now, whether you know it or not. If you've ever calmed yourself down or psyched yourself up, you've taken the trip. When you take the time to thoroughly relax, your consciousness is even more malleable. With practice, you can teach yourself to relax and enter a "trance" whenever you wish, even to the point of planting your own suggestions for yourself. No mystic swami required.

Half of this team wasted a few afternoons in his otherwise obsessively productive youth trying to learn self-hypnosis from a paperback and thought himself a failure when there were no skyrockets or rainbow auras forthcoming. Years later, listening to a self-hypnosis tape designed to help him quit smoking, he realized that he'd prepared himself for the experience rather well. He hasn't smoked since the single playing of the tape. His earlier practice had something to do with it, and so, of course, did his iron will, but so did the tape itself and the soundness of the hypnotist's technique.

It basically goes like this:

When you're ready for bed, you put a self-hypnosis tape in the Walkperson and flip it on. You are guided through a series of relaxation exercises, most of which call on the highly exotic technique of breathing deeply and slowly while the calm voice congratulates you on your decision to change your life for the better. After a series of these exercises, all interspersed with reassuring words that if there's anything that needs your attention you'll be more than able to "wake up" and cope with it instantly, the suggestions begin: you really don't like to smoke; you can overcome your death wish; when you're in a smokey room you can pretend it doesn't affect you; and, very helpful in our test case, a little breathing exercise/post-hypnotic suggestion that involves taking a deep breath and slowing letting it out while counting backwards from seven to zero whenever you want a cigarette.

There was also some tape given over to visualization, thought by many to be part of the healing process. We shrank to microscopic size so we could talk to our lungs. Our body filled with cleansing orange fluid which was then drained through our fingers and toes. Anyone who's investigated yoga or alchemy won't find any of this stuff too far out.

The smoking tape we're talking about came from **Potentials Unlimited,** whose tapes are well distributed in most chain bookstores and record stores. They make a wide variety of tapes. Only the more reasonable-sounding stuff is generally stocked at retail outlets, stuff like Smoking, Weight Loss and Stress Relief. If you get on their mailing list you can get tapes to help you explore your past lives and other attractions of the astral plane.

One nice thing about these tapes is that they are long. The smoking tape was 45 minutes and after that much time of relaxation and suggestion, you are profoundly relaxed and motivated.

The "deepness" of the trance varies. Though **John** got great results from the tapes, he was self-aware and able to recall what was said. **Martha**, on the other hand, has very little recall of the tapes after the preliminary relaxation.

Another company's products we've sampled are from **Mountain Glade Hypnosis Development Programs.** These tapes use sound effects on one side to help groove your breathing to the right tempo and to help give your conscious mind some gum to chew while the tape talks to the people in charge. On the flip side, they give you "double induction," wherein separate voices occupy either stereo track. Since you can't consciously concentrate on either voice, they maintain, your subconscious does the listening.

An even more automatic method of persuasion involves the subliminal message. We've got a few tapes from **Consciousness Tapes,** which are pleasant background music with "affirmations" mixed in below the level of audibility. Research with brain waves leads people to believe that your brain can indeed comprehend something you aren't conscious of hearing. Whether or not you act on what you hear is much more difficult to establish. Which brings us to the criticism that the music on these tapes is barely listenable. Why not a machine that mixes your choice of message in your stereo or television.

You could get "Do a good job. Don't kill your boss," with the **Today Show.** After work it could be, "Nice job. You can relax now. Don't forget to eat your vegetables." For parties: "Eat and be merry. Don't drive drunk."

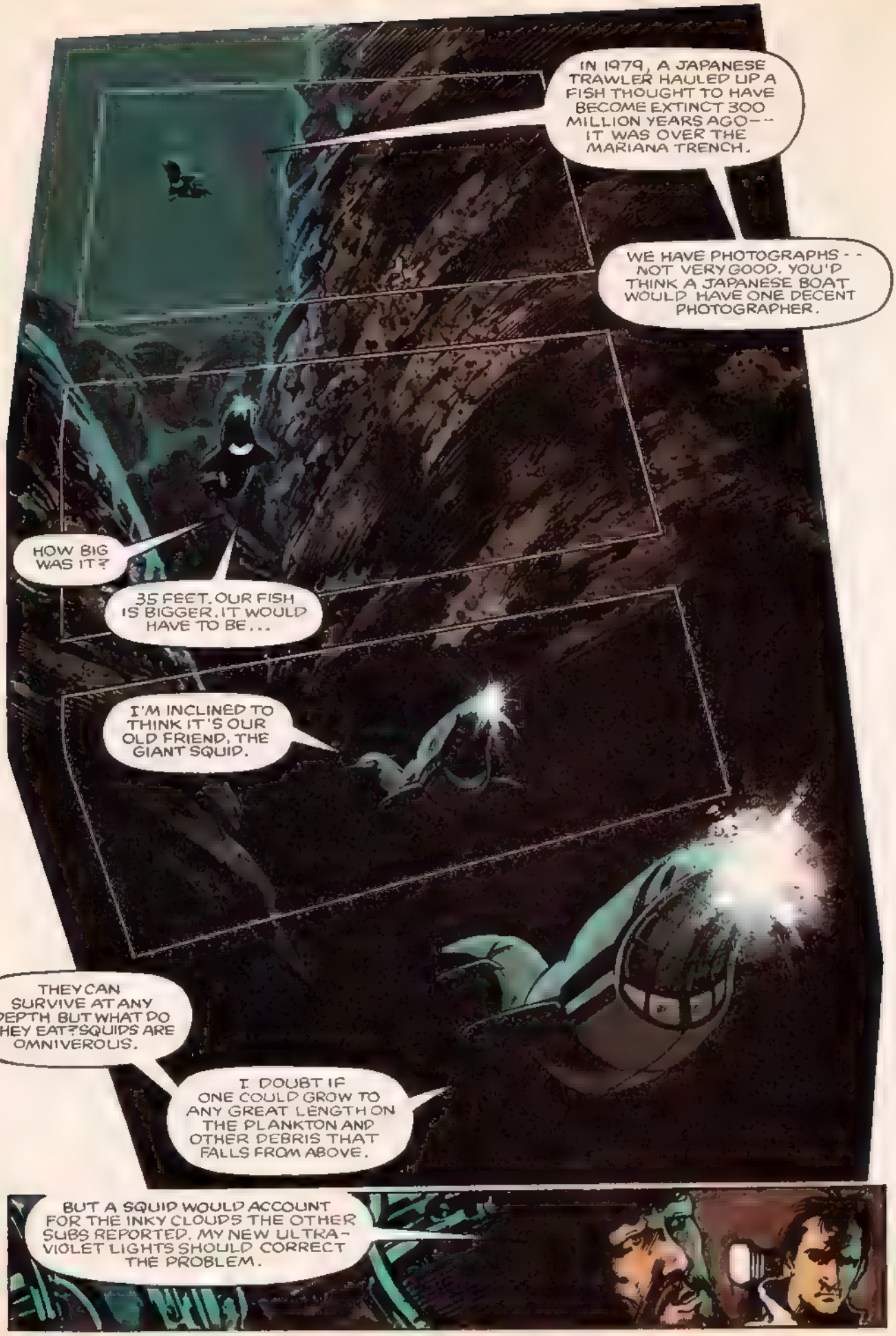
All together now. Take a deep breath. Let it out slowly. Think pleasant thoughts. Buy this magazine!

1999 NORTH PACIFIC.
"DEEP PROBE 7 TO MOTHER HEN--WE ARE AT 9750 METERS -- WE ARE IN POSITION TO TAKE A CORE SAMPLE..."
TAKE IT EASY, PROBE 7, YOU'RE IN THE EXACT SPOT WE LOST PROBE 6.
ANY SIGN OF WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?
IT'S UP TO YOU, JIMMY.
THINK YOU CAN PULL A SAMPLE AND GET BACK UP HERE BY 1600?
IF THIS SEA WORSENS I'LL HAVE DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING POSITION, MR COLE.
NEGATIVE, CHUCK. INFRA-RED SHOWS ZIP AND THERE'S SOME KIND OF DUST DOWN HERE--KEEPS VISION PRETTY LOW. WE'RE ABOUT 200 METERS OFF THE CANYON WALL-- THE BOTTOM SHOULD BE JUST BELOW.
CAN DO, CHUCK. WE'VE ALREADY DEPLOYED THE DRILL.
WE'RE GOING IN SMOOTH AS A KNIFE THROUGH CHEESECAKE--GREAT ZOT!!
JIMMY! JIMMY! HELLO, DEEP PROBE! GODAMMNIT! WE'VE LOST HER!
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT? WE LOST ANOTHER SUB IN THE EXACT SAME SPOT!

story © 1985 Mike Baron/artwork © 1985 John Totleben

WHAT THE HELL IS DOWN THERE?
SEATTLE. ONE WEEK LATER.
CHUCK, THIS IS PROFESSOR DODD, INVENTOR OF THE DEEP PROBE SERIES SUBMARINE. PROFESSOR DODD - CHUCK AMES - IN CHARGE OF OUR NORTH PACIFIC PETROLEUM EXPLORATION PROJECT.
HI!
PLEASED TO MEET YOU. HOPEFULLY, WE CAN GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THESE TRAGIC ACCIDENTS.
MRS KEPPLER TELLS ME YOU'VE GOT A NEW SUB..
FISH STORY
YES INDEED...NOT THAT THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH OUR STANDARD PROBE.
BUT EVER SINCE KEPCO DISCOVERED THAT TRENCH YOU'VE HAD A SERIES OF MISHAPS WHICH TEND TO INDICATE THE PRESENCE OF A BIG FISH
A BIG FISH?
OH COME NOW, HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT COVERING UP FOR DESIGN FAILURE?
MRS. KEPPLER, I INTEND TO PILOT THE NEXT EXPEDITION MYSELF.
I'LL BRING YOU BACK A CORE SAMPLE OR KNOW THE REASON WHY.
I'M GOING WITH HIM. THERE'S SOMETHING DOWN THERE. I CAN FEEL IT.
GENTLEMEN - THAT SOUNDS LIKE A FISH STORY...
BUT KEPCO NEEDS ANOTHER STRIKE BADLY SO I WILL AUTHORIZE ANOTHER EXPEDITION

TELL ME YOUR FISH STORY AGAIN, PROFESSOR . .
CERTAINLY. SOME ANIMALS, THE COMMON CARP, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE NO NATURAL GROWTH LIMITS EXCEPT FOR THE AMOUNT OF FOOD AVAILABLE TO THEM.
NOW THIS TRENCH YOU'VE DISCOVERED. . . IT'S DEEP ENOUGH THAT IT COULD SUSTAIN ANY NUMBER OF CREATURES.
FROM TIME TO TIME BIZARRE AQUATIC CREATURES ARE DREDGED FROM THE OCEAN'S DEEPEST REGIONS.
YOUR DEEP-WATER FISH IS HIGHLY SPECIALIZED. .
THEY COULD SUBSIST ON EACH OTHER, OR ON PROTEIN MATTER THAT SIFTS DOWN FROM ABOVE...
YOU'RE NOT TALK NG ABOUT CARP
NO.
SO WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR SUBS?
THE LARGER IT IS THE LESS LIKELY IT WILL TURN OUT TO BE A CARNIVORE.
WELL IT'S ONLY A THEORY OF COURSE, BUT A DEEP WATER TRENCH WOULD PROVIDE A NATURAL FUNNEL FOR DEAD AND DECAYING PLANT LIFE SIFTING DOWN FROM ABOVE.


IN 1979, A JAPANESE TRAWLER HAULED UP A FISH THOUGHT TO HAVE BECOME EXTINCT 300 MILLION YEARS AGO-- IT WAS OVER THE MARIANA TRENCH.
WE HAVE PHOTOGRAPHS - - NOT VERY GOOD. YOU'D THINK A JAPANESE BOAT WOULD HAVE ONE DECENT PHOTOGRAPHER.
HOW BIG WAS IT?
35 FEET. OUR FISH IS BIGGER. IT WOULD HAVE TO BE...
I'M INCLINED TO THINK IT'S OUR OLD FRIEND, THE GIANT SQUID.
THEY CAN SURVIVE AT ANY DEPTH. BUT WHAT DO THEY EAT? SQUIDS ARE OMNIVEROUS.
I DOUBT IF ONE COULD GROW TO ANY GREAT LENGTH ON THE PLANKTON AND OTHER DEBRIS THAT FALLS FROM ABOVE.
BUT A SQUID WOULD ACCOUNT FOR THE INKY CLOUDS THE OTHER SUBS REPORTED. MY NEW ULTRA-VIOLET LIGHTS SHOULD CORRECT THE PROBLEM.

SOMETIMES I FEEL MAN HAS NO PLACE IN THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS... THAT WHATEVER HAPPENED TO PROBE 667 WAS .. I DON'T KNOW.. A WARNING...
DON'T WORRY, CHUCK. THIS BABY IS ARMED WITH TRANK-TORPS. ENOUGH TO STOP A SPERM WHALE
IF WORSE COMES TO WORST, WE'VE ALSO GOT SODIUM TORPS... BUT THAT WOULD BE A GREAT TRAGEDY.
AS A SCIENTIST, I AM MORE INTERESTED IN ANY FISH WE FIND THAN IN ANOTHER DULL AND POSSIBLY DANGEROUS PETROLEUM DEPOSIT.
YEAH RIGHT...
Y'KNOW, WHEN I WAS A KID, I USED TO FLIP OVER STORIES ABOUT DINOSAURS AND GIANT SEA MONSTERS AND STUFF.
I ALWAYS WISHED I COULD SEE ONE SOMEDAY
WE'VE ENTERED THE TRENCH, PROFESSOR SONAR SHOWS NO NOTABLE ANIMAL LIFE... WAIT A MINUTE!
CLOUDS OF BLACK INK RISING TO MEET US BUT THERE'S NOTHING BENEATH US.
NOTHING BUT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA...
AND THE WALLS OF THE TRENCH.
THE TRENCH WALLS ARE RIPPLING. ANY DANGER OF A CAVE IN?
I DOUBT THAT VERY MUCH!
THE OTHER SUBS DISAPPEARED AFTER THEY STARTED TO DRILL...
BACK OFF FROM THE TRENCH WALL ABOUT 500 METERS...
I THINK IT'S TIME TO TURN ON THE LIGHTS.

MOTHER TO DEEP PROBE 8--WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THE TRENCH WALLS ARE FLUCTUATING--THE TRENCH APPEARS TO BE THE RESULT OF UNDERSEA VOLCANIC ACTIVITY...
NO SIGN OF DEEP PROBES 6 OR 7...
WE ARE SURFACING... IMPOSSIBLE TO TAKE CORE SAMPLES.
I DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT YOU COULD DRILL HERE...
...VOLCANIC ACTIVITY COULD CLOSE THE TRENCH AT ANY TIME, MRS KEPPLER.
PROBES 6 AND 7 MAY HAVE PRECIPITATED THEIR OWN DEMISE WHEN THEY DRILLED INTO UNSTABLE ROCK.
OH YES, IT'S MUCH TOO DANGEROUS TO DRILL DOWN THERE
THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN. I DON'T SEE WHERE WE HAVE A CHOICE...
WE'LL HAVE TO ABANDON THE N PACIFIC TRENCH.
WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT A GIANT SQUID EATS?
YOU COULDN'T KEEP ME AWAY.
KEPCO
I SEE. CHUCK...DO YOU CONCUR?

Ein Heldentraum

(A HERO'S DREAM)

- THE IDEAL — #TWO -

AFTER HUGO WOLF'S SETTING OF GOETHE'S POEM~

DER NEUE AMADIS

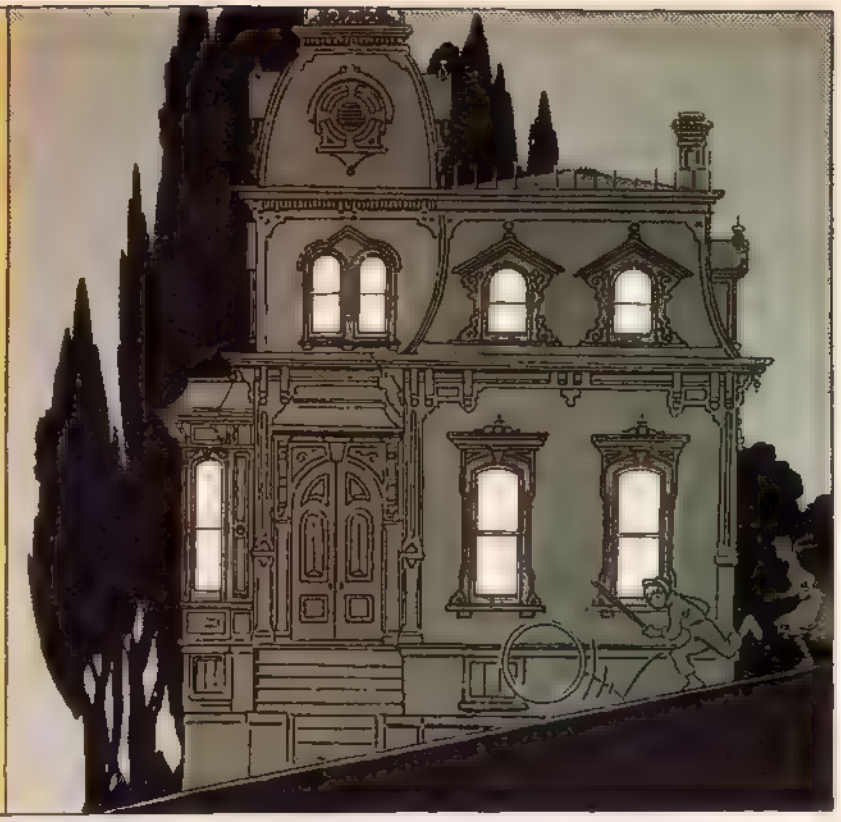
SCRIPT PATRICK MASON · ART P. CRAIG RUSSELL

LETTERING - BILL PEARSON

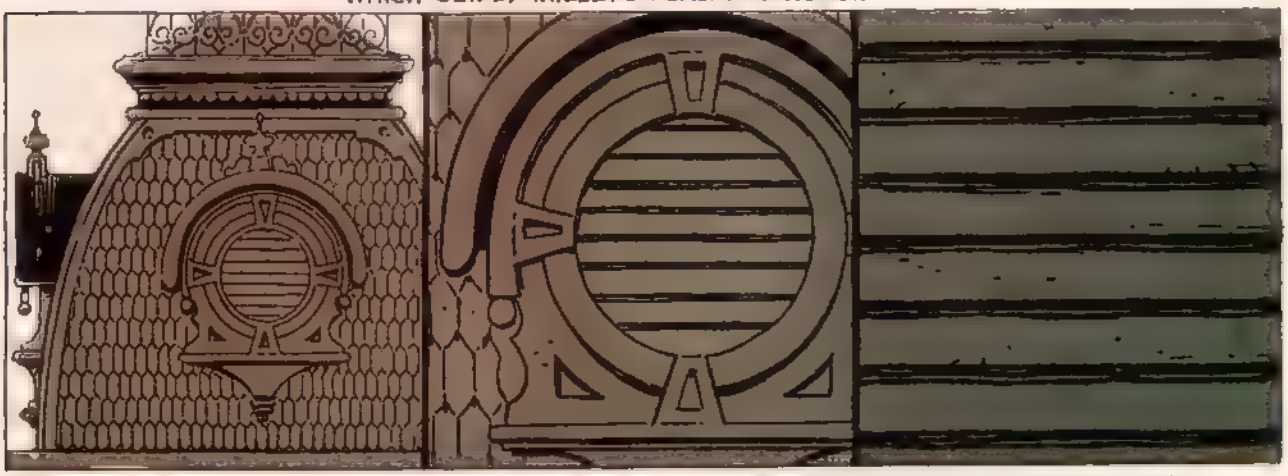
IN MEMORIUM - W. WOOD

- OPUS 20 -

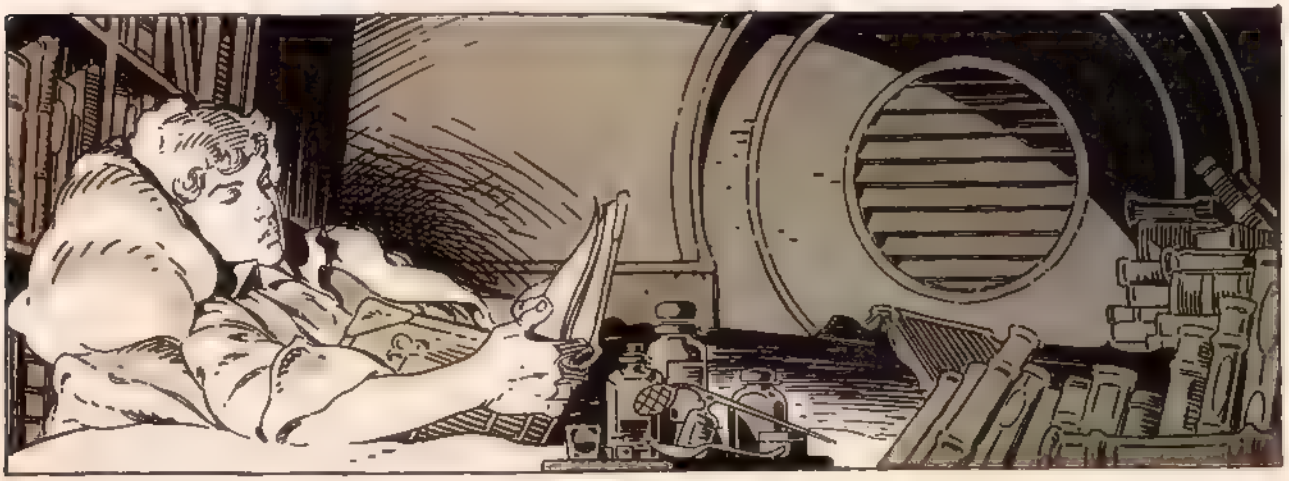
TO THOSE OUTSIDE, THAT HOUSE MUST HAVE SEEMED A PRISON WHERE I, AS A SICK AND BEDRIDDEN CHILD, WAS HELD IN THE OPPRESSIVE PALLOR WHICH CLUNG SO FEARFULLY TO ITS WALLS.



I, HOWEVER, REALLY DID NOT KNOW WHILE GROWING UP THERE THAT THE SOUNDS I HEARD WERE NOT PERHAPS BEETHOVEN'S TRIUMPHANT AND TERRIBLE SPRING MARCHING BY — OR THAT THE LIGHT WHICH FILTERED THROUGH TO ME WAS NOT THE SAME WHICH GUIDED MILLET'S PEASANTS HOME.



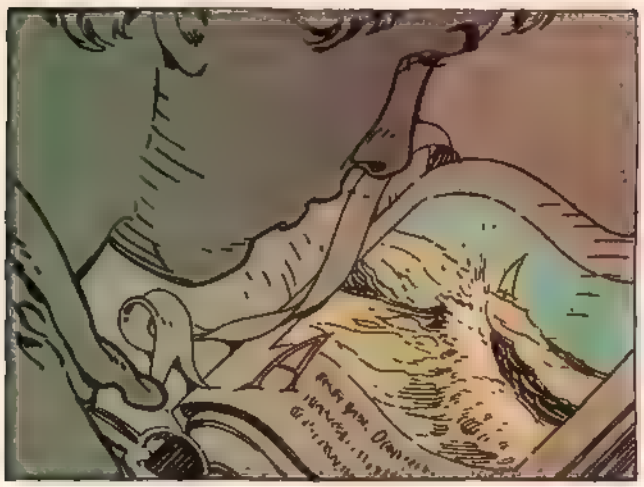
THE FULL GLARE OF NOON, THE DEEP LAUGHTER OF VICTORIOUS YOUNG LOVERS NEVER REACHED ME... OR, IF IT DID,.. ...I DIDN'T NOTICE. FOR SURROUNDING ME WERE DOORS, WINDOWS, TURRETED GATES TO A BRIGHT, ENCHANTING WORLD WHICH WAS ALWAYS NEW - AND ALWAYS MINE.

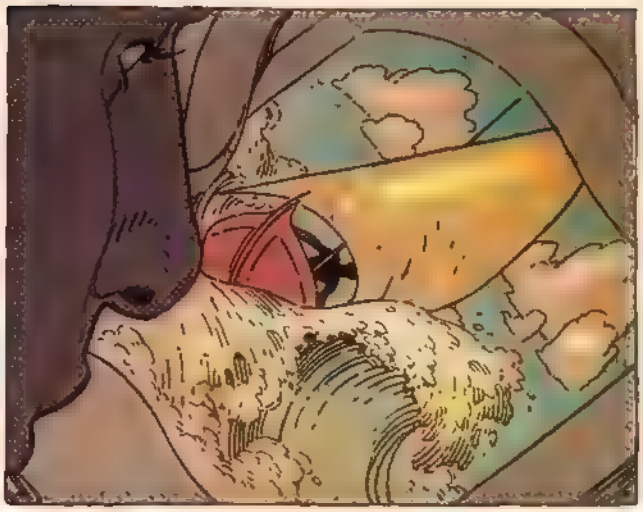


© 1985 P. Craig Russell

A WORLD REVEALING ITS BROADENING VISTAS TO MY HORIZON-HUNGRY EYES.

I WAS FREE THERE...

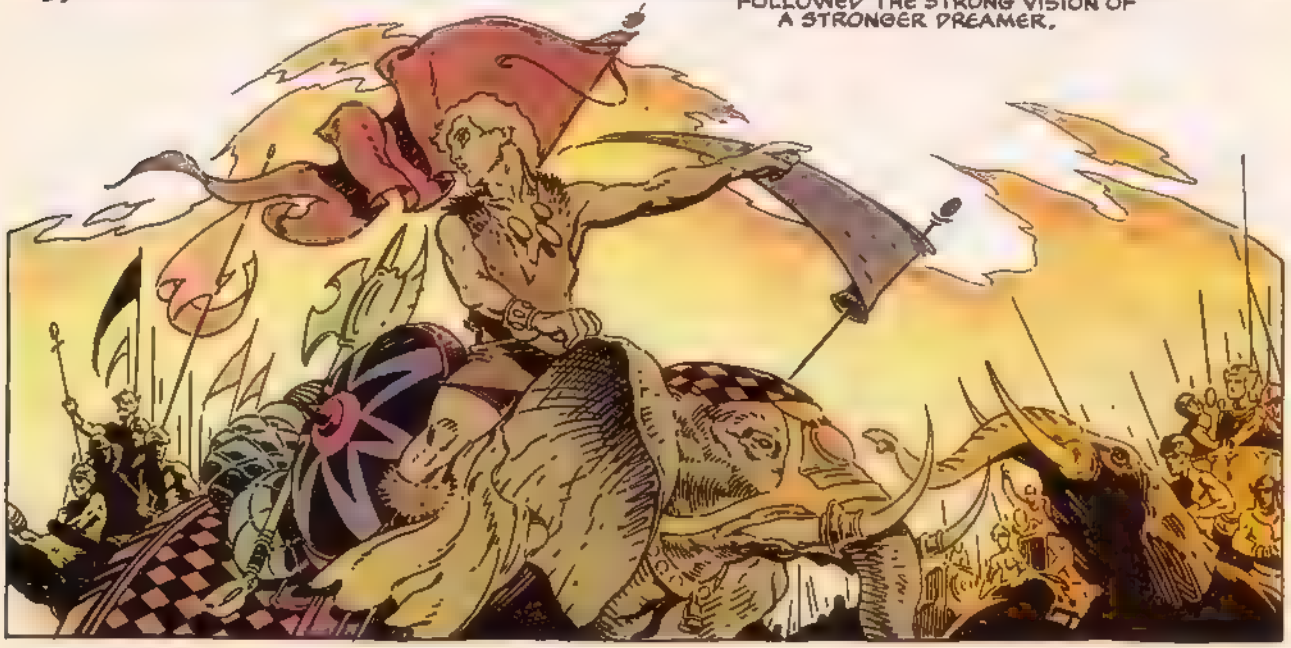


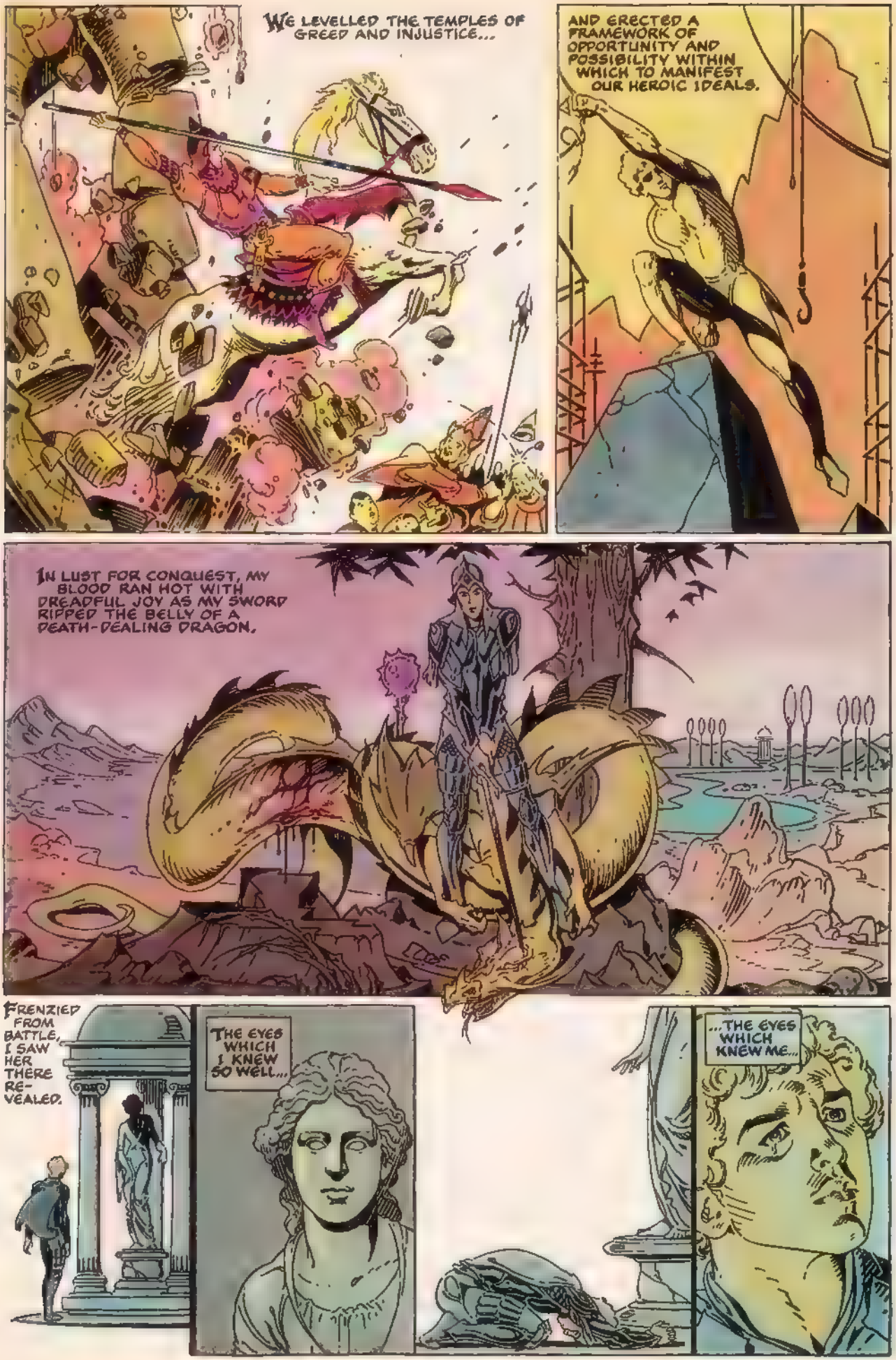


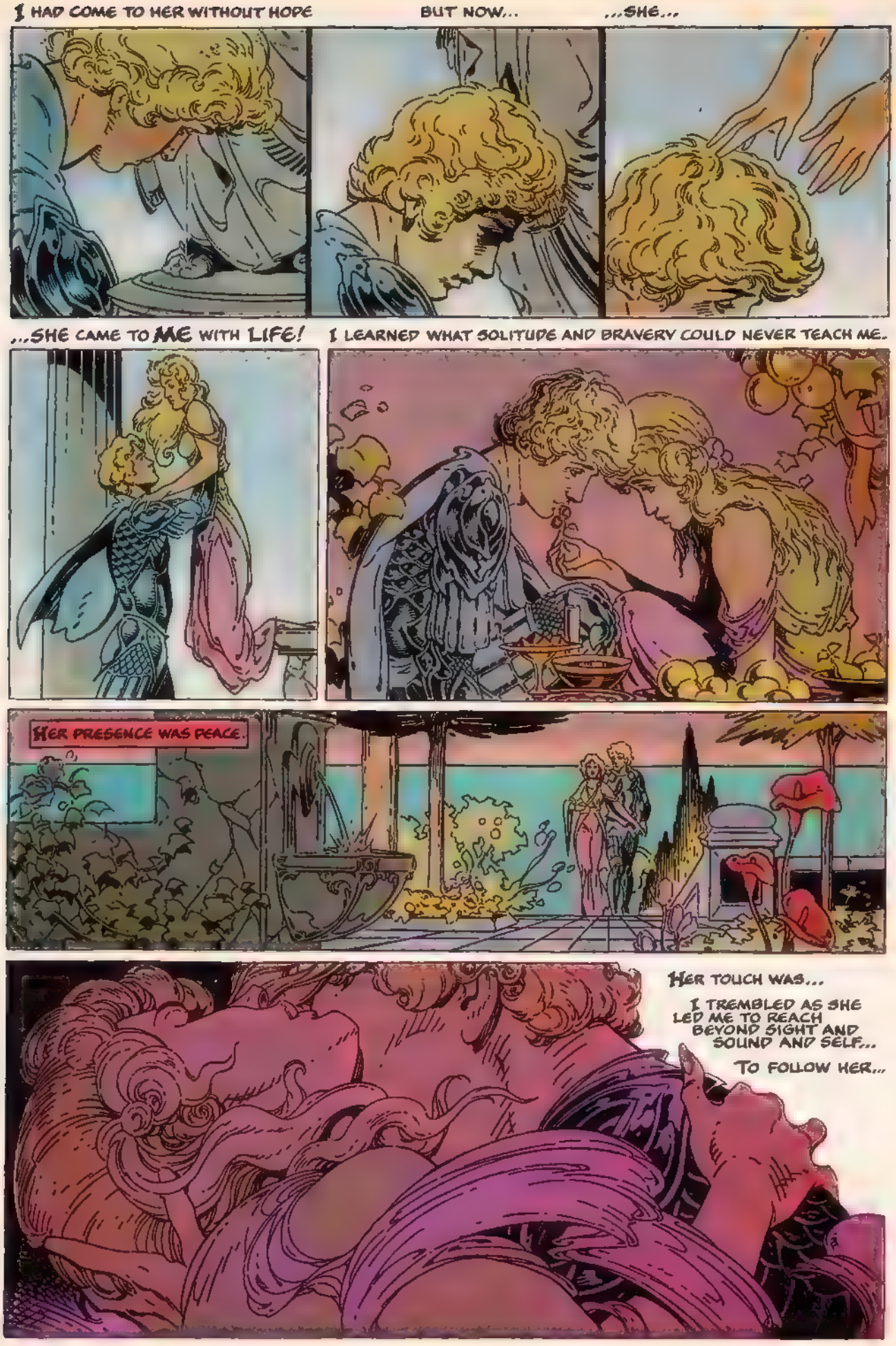
FREE TO FEEL THE SHARP, STINGING SALT WIND OF DISTANT SEAS LASHING MY FACE.

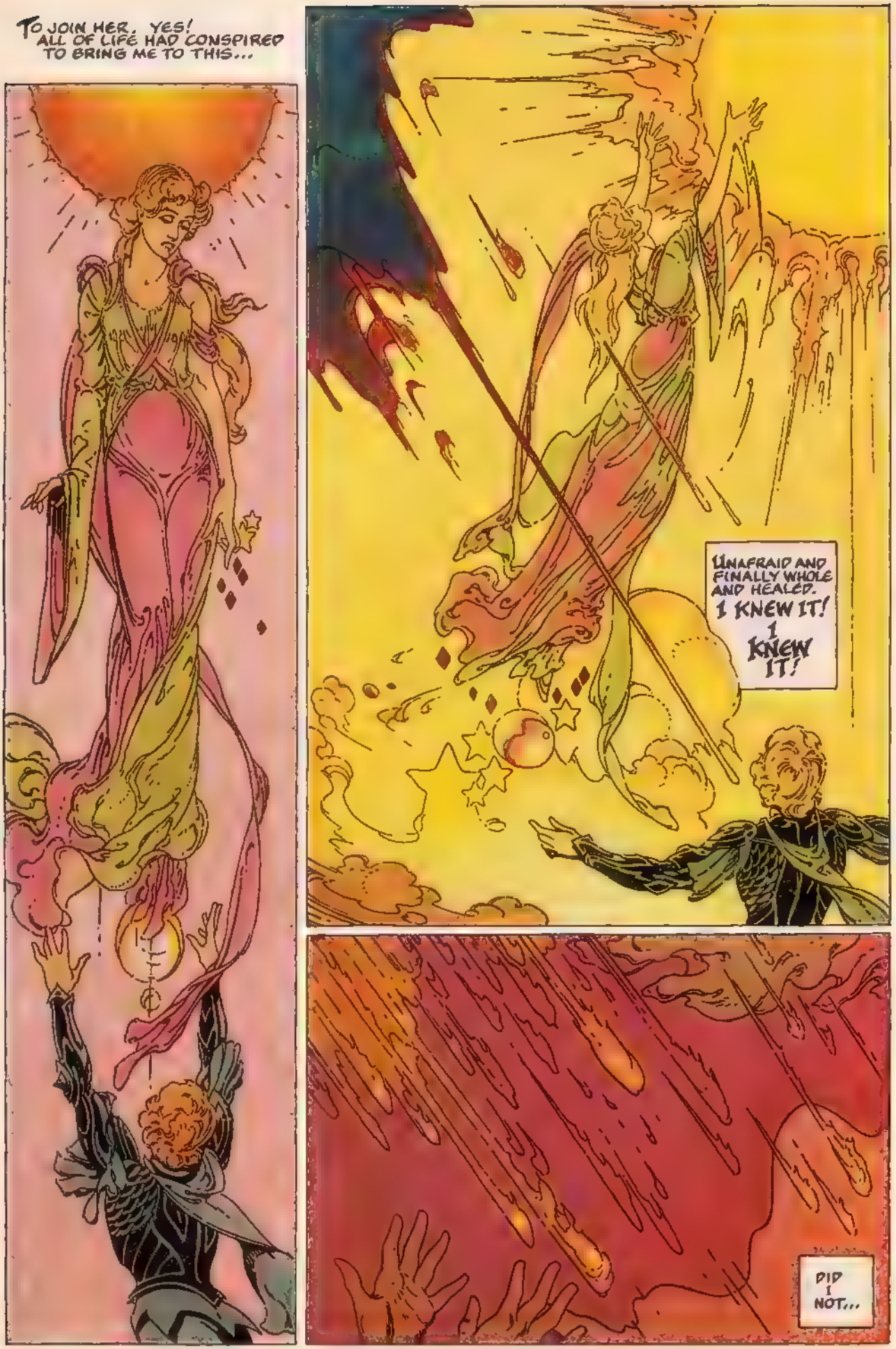
EVERY NEED, EMERGENT AND PRIMAL, WAS MET BY THE VERY ENVIRONMENT WHICH HAD CREATED THE NECESSITY.

LIFE WAS SWORD AND BLOOD AND UNSOUGHT-FOR ADVENTURE AT EVERY TURN, WHERE WEAK MEN FOLLOWED THE STRONG VISION OF A STRONGER DREAMER.




We levelled the temples of greed and injustice...
and erected a framework of opportunity and possibility within which to manifest our heroic ideals.
In lust for conquest, my blood ran hot with dreadful joy as my sword ripped the belly of a death-dealing dragon.
Frenzied from battle, I saw her there revealed.
The eyes which I knew so well...
...the eyes which knew me...

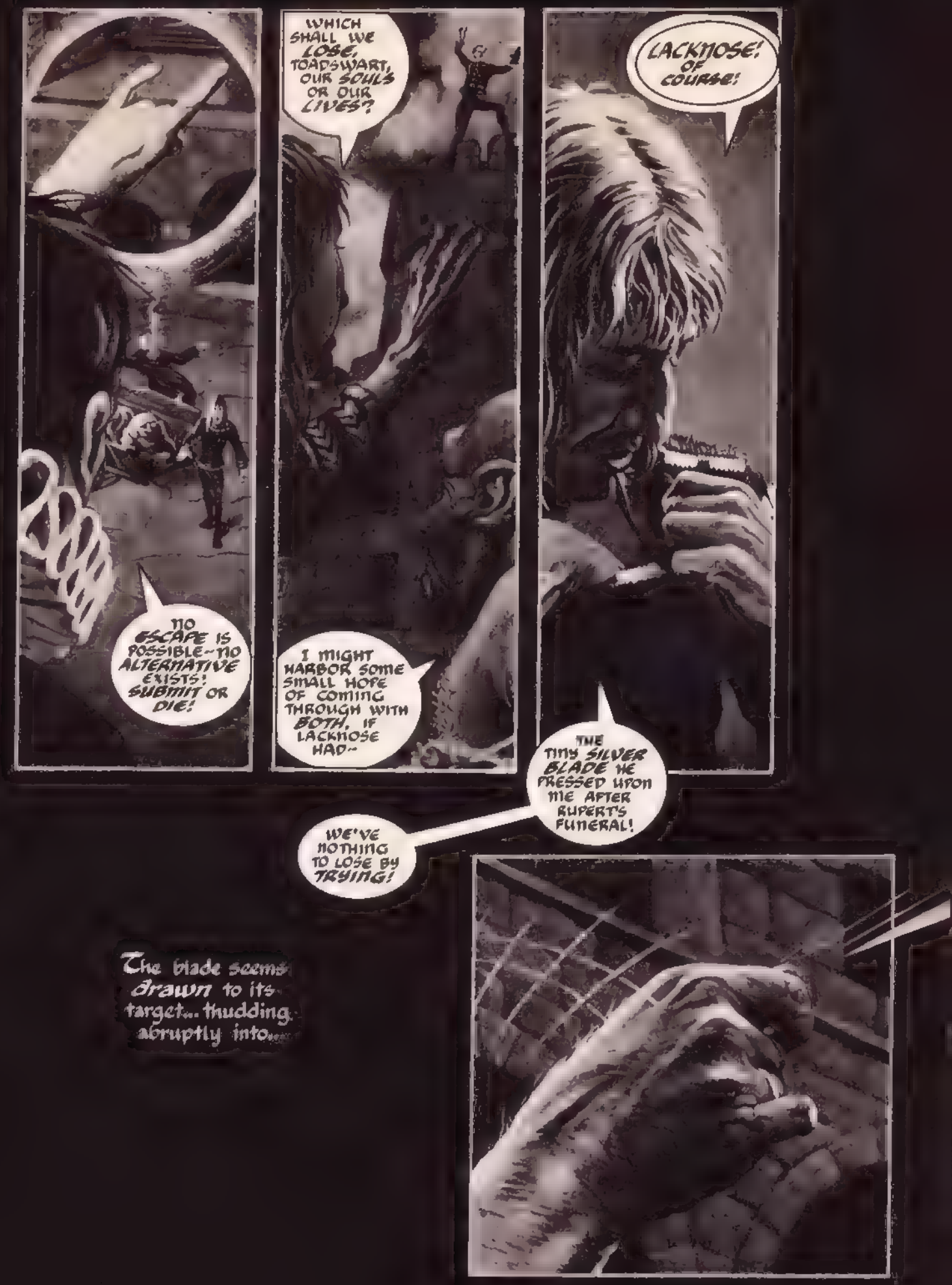

I HAD COME TO HER WITHOUT HOPE
BUT NOW...
...SHE...
...SHE CAME TO ME WITH LIFE!
I LEARNED WHAT SOLITUDE AND BRAVERY COULD NEVER TEACH ME.
HER PRESENCE WAS PEACE.
HER TOUCH WAS...
I TREMBLED AS SHE LED ME TO REACH BEYOND SIGHT AND SOUND AND SELF...
TO FOLLOW HER...


TO JOIN HER. YES! ALL OF LIFE HAD CONSPIRED TO BRING ME TO THIS...
UNAFRAID AND FINALLY WHOLE AND HEALED. I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT!
DID I NOT...

BUT THE LIGHT, GREY—
THE SOUND, DEAD AND TOO NEAR — AND I HERE... ALIVE AND ALONE...
HERE
WHY DID SHE WAKEN TO ME?
WHY DID I EVER HAVE TO KNOW?
WHY IS THE REAL PRISON SO FREE OF GATES AND BARS AND DOORS...
...SO FREE OF DREAMS?
ENDE

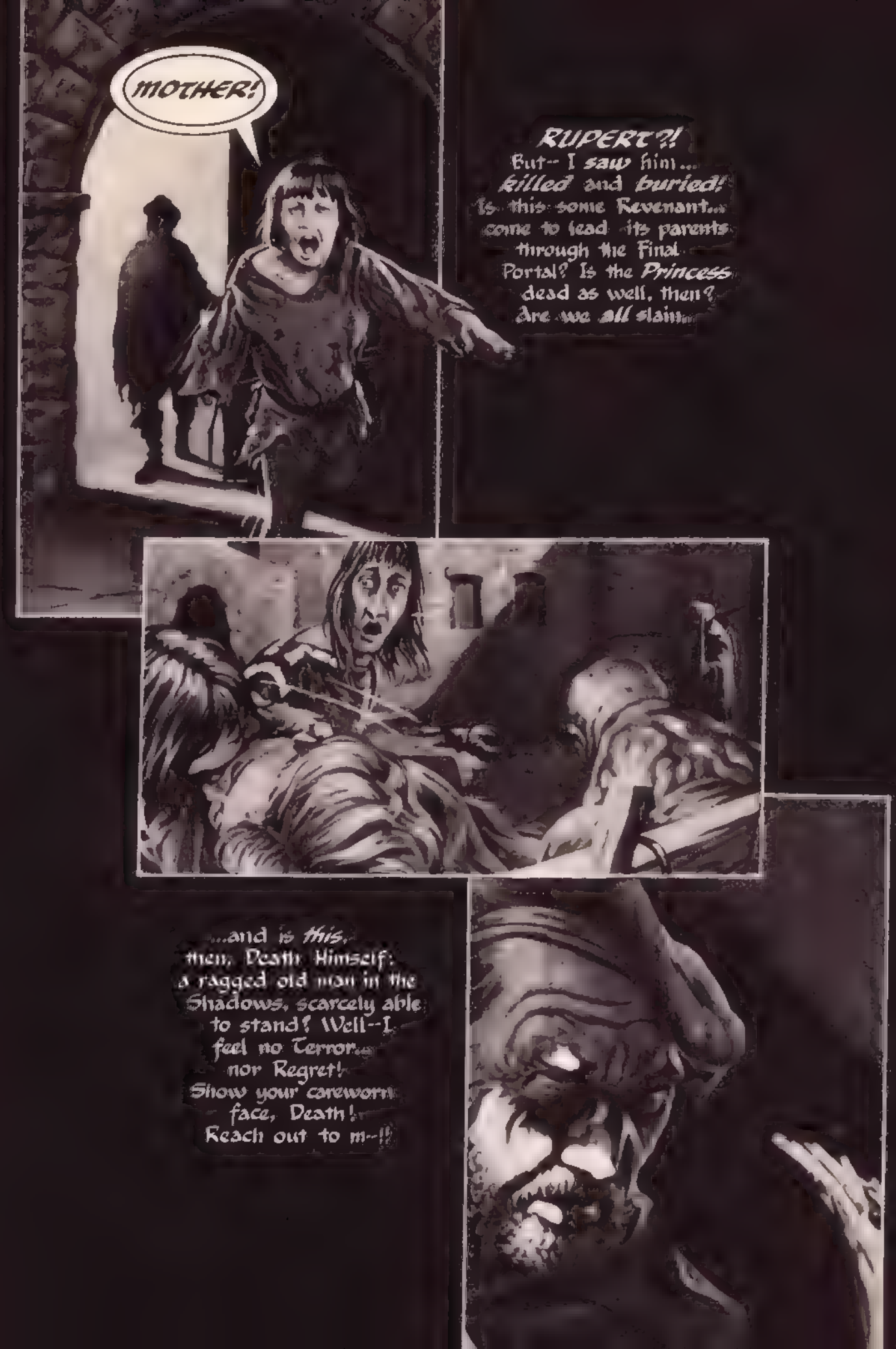
YOU CANNOT EVADE THE BEAST! YOU CANNOT HIDE OR RUN AWAY!
THE MONSTER IS EVERY-WHERE!
SURRENDER AND SERVE!!

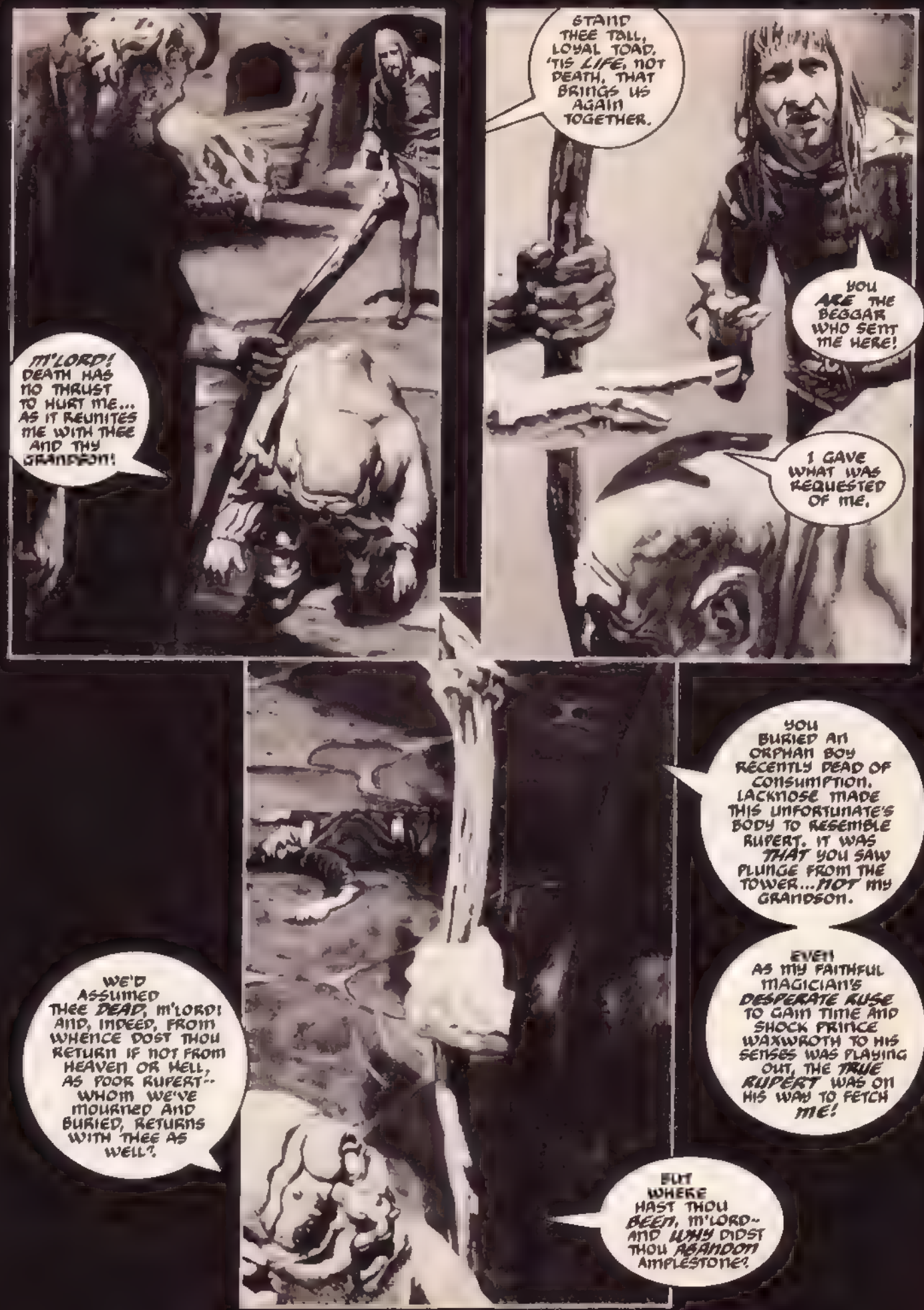
ELSE BE SUBDUED! CONSUMED! ANNIHILATED !!!!!


NO ESCAPE IS POSSIBLE~NO ALTERNATIVE EXISTS! SUBMIT OR DIE!
WHICH SHALL WE LOSE, TOADSWART, OUR SOULS OR OUR LIVES?
I MIGHT HARBOR SOME SMALL HOPE OF COMING THROUGH WITH BOTH, IF LACKNOSE HAD~
LACKNOSE! OF COURSE!
THE TINY SILVER BLADE HE PRESSED UPON ME AFTER RUPERT'S FUNERAL!
WE'VE NOTHING TO LOSE BY TRYING!
The blade seems drawn to its target... thudding abruptly into...

...nothing?! It quivers in the air over Waxwroth's heart...as if imbedded in some unseen body that contains his own!
Something dreadful has been Stricken...and Driven away!
Nor could this Appalling Shriek of Pain and Defeat come from the Mad Prince alone!

FATHER!


MOTHER!
RUPERT?!
But-- I saw him... killed and buried! Is this some Revenant... come to lead its parents through the Final Portal? Is the Princess dead as well, then? Are we all slain...
...and is this, then, Death Himself: a ragged old man in the Shadows, scarcely able to stand? Well--I feel no Terror... nor Regret! Show your careworn face, Death! Reach out to m--!!


M'LORD! DEATH HAS NO THRUST TO HURT ME... AS IT REUNITES ME WITH THEE AND THY GRANDSON!
STAND THEE TALL, LOYAL TOAD, 'TIS LIFE, NOT DEATH, THAT BRINGS US AGAIN TOGETHER.
YOU ARE THE BEGGAR WHO SENT ME HERE!
I GAVE WHAT WAS REQUESTED OF ME.
WE'D ASSUMED THEE DEAD, M'LORD! AND, INDEED, FROM WHENCE DOST THOU RETURN IF NOT FROM HEAVEN OR HELL, AS POOR RUPERT-- WHOM WE'VE MOURNED AND BURIED, RETURNS WITH THEE AS WELL?
YOU BURIED AN ORPHAN BOY RECENTLY DEAD OF CONSUMPTION. LACKNOSE MADE THIS UNFORTUNATE'S BODY TO RESEMBLE RUPERT. IT WAS THAT YOU SAW PLUNGE FROM THE TOWER...NOT MY GRANDSON.
EVEN! AS MY FAITHFUL MAGICIAN'S DESPERATE RUSE TO GAIN TIME AND SHOCK PRINCE WAXWROTH TO HIS SENSES WAS PLAYING OUT, THE TRUE RUPERT WAS ON HIS WAY TO FETCH ME!
BUT WHERE HAST THOU BEEN, M'LORD-- AND WHY DIDST THOU ABANDON AMPLESTONE?

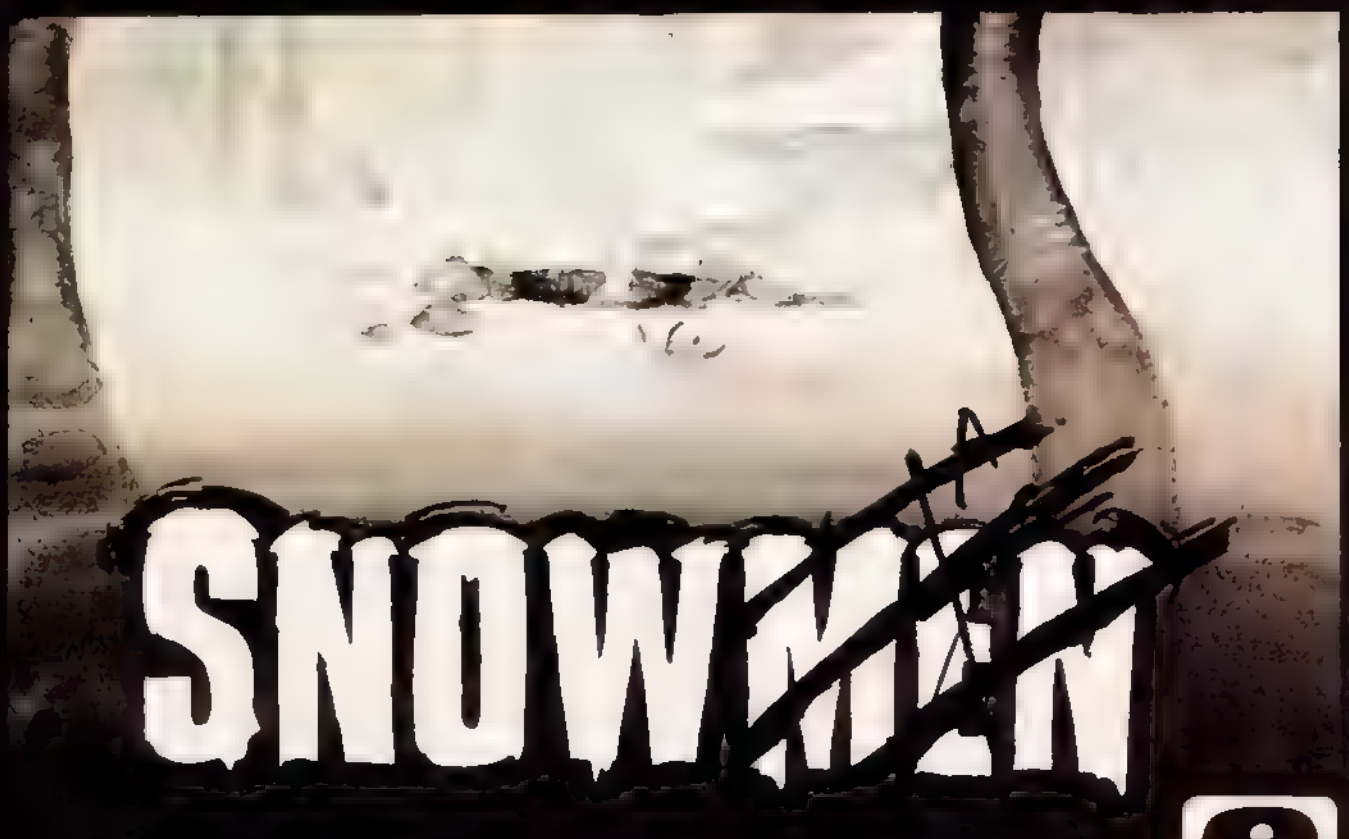
A TIME HAD COME-- BOTH FOR MYSELF AND MY SON-- EVEN AS IT COMES FOR EVERYONE-- TO STAND ALONE-- TWIXT DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT...
I HAVE BEEN... WHERE I WAS CALLED. TO FURTHER--AS DO WE ALL, EACH DAY-- THE PROGRESS OF MY SOUL.
...AND MAKE OUR CHOICE.
FINIS

© 1985 Kent Williams

BLAM!
SNOWMEN

BLAM!

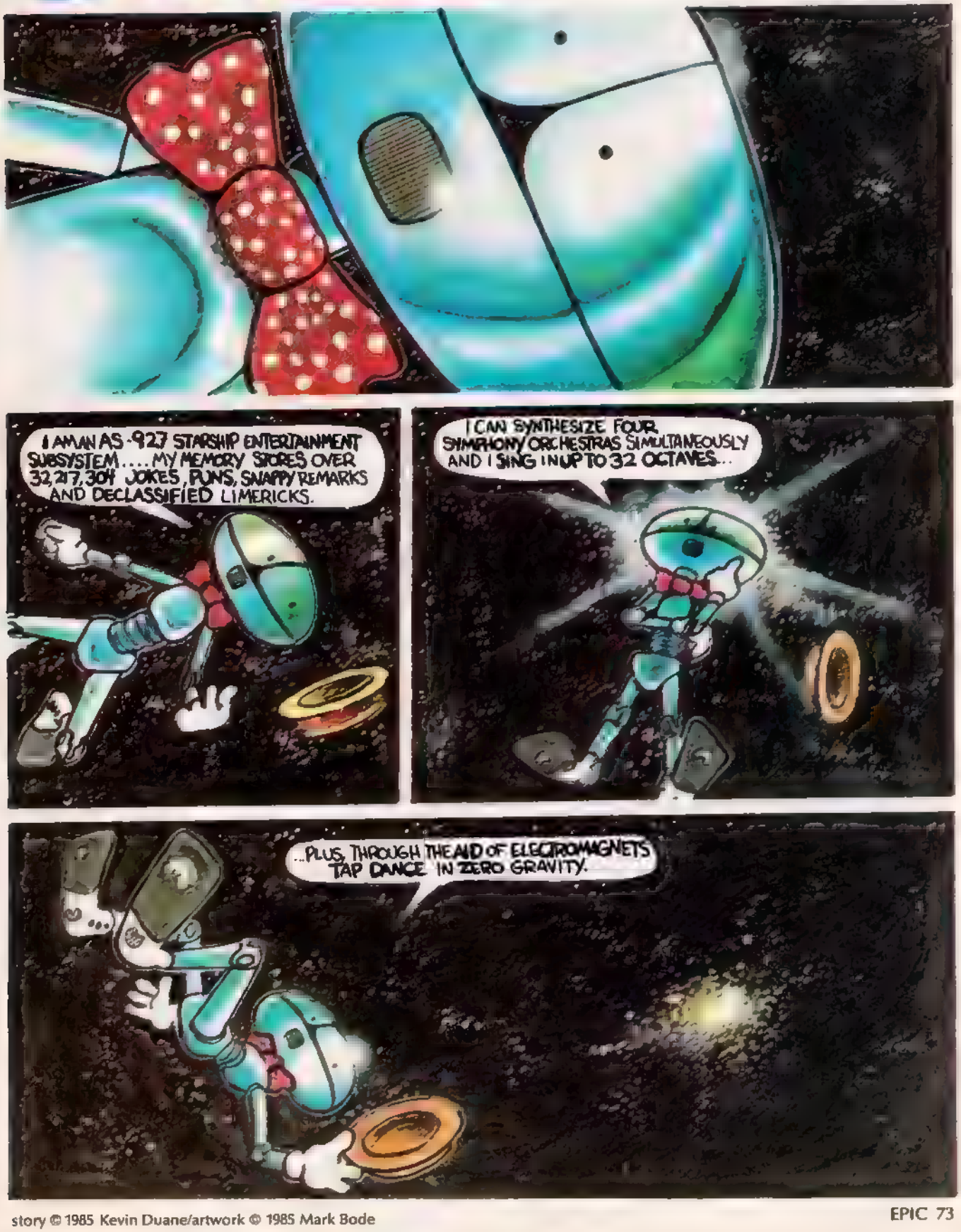
BLAM!


SNOWMEN

SNICKERS

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

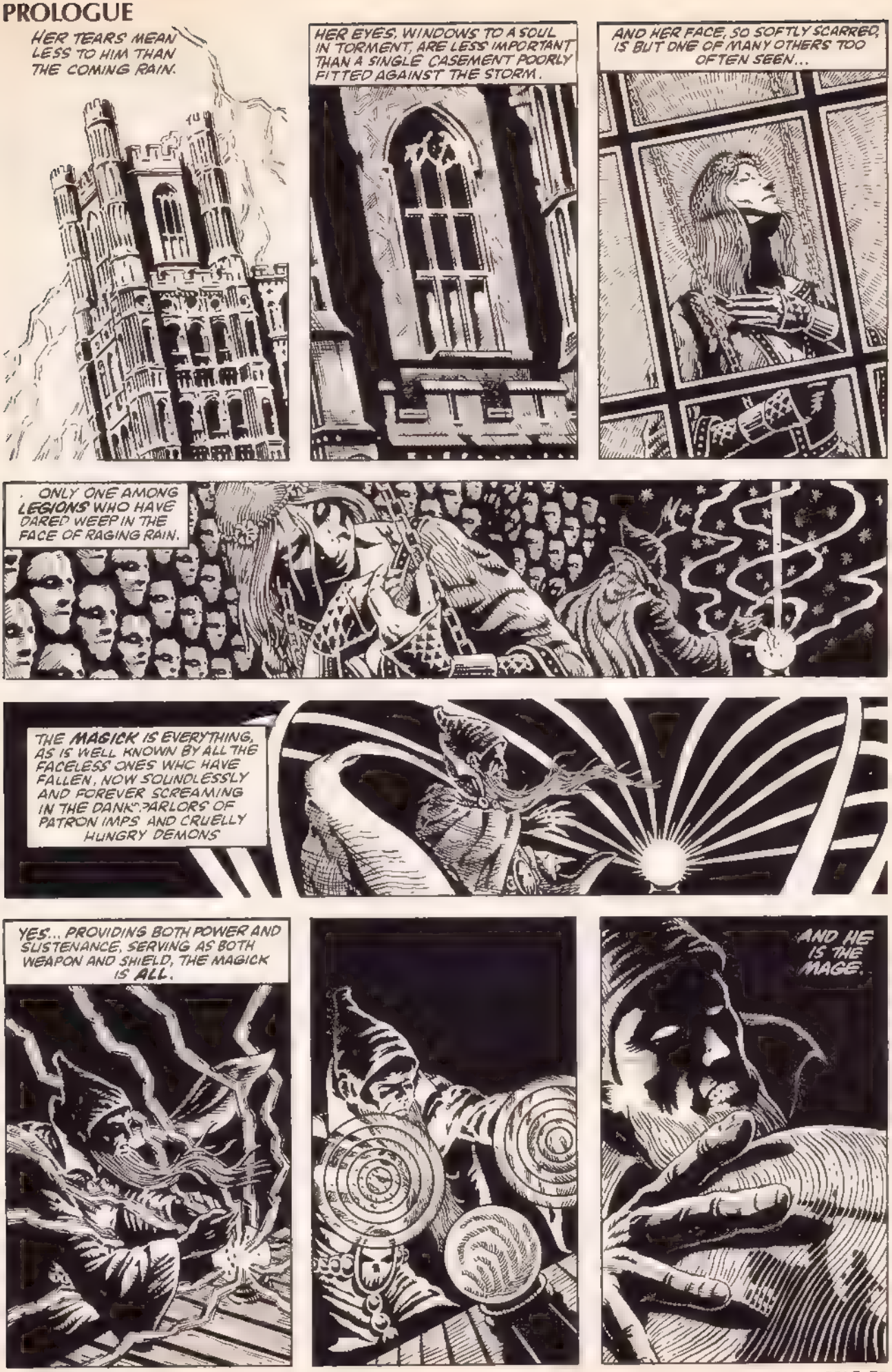
WRITTEN BY KEVIN DUANE
ILLUSTRATED BY MARK BODE
© 1982


I AM AN AS-927 STARSHIP ENTERTAINMENT SUBSYSTEM.... MY MEMORY STORES OVER 32,217,304 JOKES, PUNS, SNAPPY REMARKS AND DECLASSIFIED LIMERICKS.
I CAN SYNTHESIZE FOUR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS SIMULTANEOUSLY AND I SING IN UP TO 32 OCTAVES...
...PLUS, THROUGH THE AID OF ELECTROMAGNETS TAP DANCE IN ZERO GRAVITY.

story © 1985 Kevin Duane/artwork © 1985 Mark Bode

AND YET, WITH ALL THIS, I HAVE DEEP SURGES WITHIN ME TO EXCELL .. TO GO.. BEYOND MY PROGRAMMED FUNCTION.
I HAVE CREATED A JOKE...
LAST NIGHT AT DINNER I HIT THE CAPTAIN SQUARE IN THE FACE WITH A YEASTY CREAM PIE...
...AND HE STUFFED ME OUT THE GARBAGE DISPOSAL.
HELL, I THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY.

PROLOGUE


HER TEARS MEAN LESS TO HIM THAN THE COMING RAIN.
HER EYES, WINDOWS TO A SOUL IN TORMENT, ARE LESS IMPORTANT THAN A SINGLE CASEMENT POORLY FITTED AGAINST THE STORM.
AND HER FACE, SO SOFTLY SCARRED, IS BUT ONE OF MANY OTHERS TOO OFTEN SEEN...
. ONLY ONE AMONG LEGIONS WHO HAVE DARED WEEP IN THE FACE OF RAGING RAIN.
THE MAGICK IS EVERYTHING, AS IS WELL KNOWN BY ALL THE FACELESS ONES WHO HAVE FALLEN, NOW SOUNDLESSLY AND FOREVER SCREAMING IN THE DANK PARLORS OF PATRON IMPS AND CRUELLY HUNGRY DEMONS
YES... PROVIDING BOTH POWER AND SUSTENANCE, SERVING AS BOTH WEAPON AND SHIELD, THE MAGICK IS ALL.
AND HE IS THE MAGE.

story by Gene Day
script © 1985 Doug Moench/artwork © 1985 Dan Day

THE CHAMPION
HE HAS JOURNEYED FOREVER, FROM THE LIGHT INTO A DARKNESS EVER DEEPENING.
DRAWN BY THE TEARS HE KNOWS MUST FALL...
...BY THAT WHICH GIVES HIM BREATH, AND WHICH HOLDS ALL THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE HE CAN CONCEIVE.

OH, SILENCE!
YOUR WHIMPERING DISTURBS THE MOLECULES.
HE WILL COME.
HOW COULD HE NOT AFTER WHAT I DID TO HIM--?
--AFTER WHAT I DID TO YOU BOTH?
WHAT. WHAT HAVE THE TWO OF YOU DONE TO ME?!

YES... HE *WILL* COME, AND THIS TIME WITH SWORD AND LANCE BROUGHT STIFFLY TO BEAR...

BUT THIS TIME, TOO, THE POTENCY OF MY *MAGICK* SHALL SPELL ONE LOVE'S *END* AND ANOTHER'S *BEGINNING*.

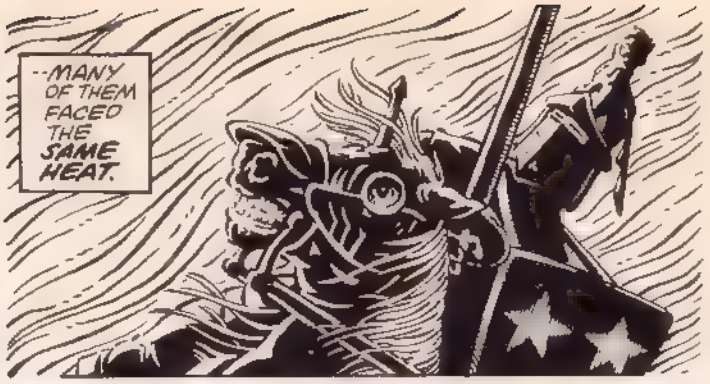
YOUR *HAIR*, FAITHLESS ONE...

DRENCHED IN *MY* GRIEF

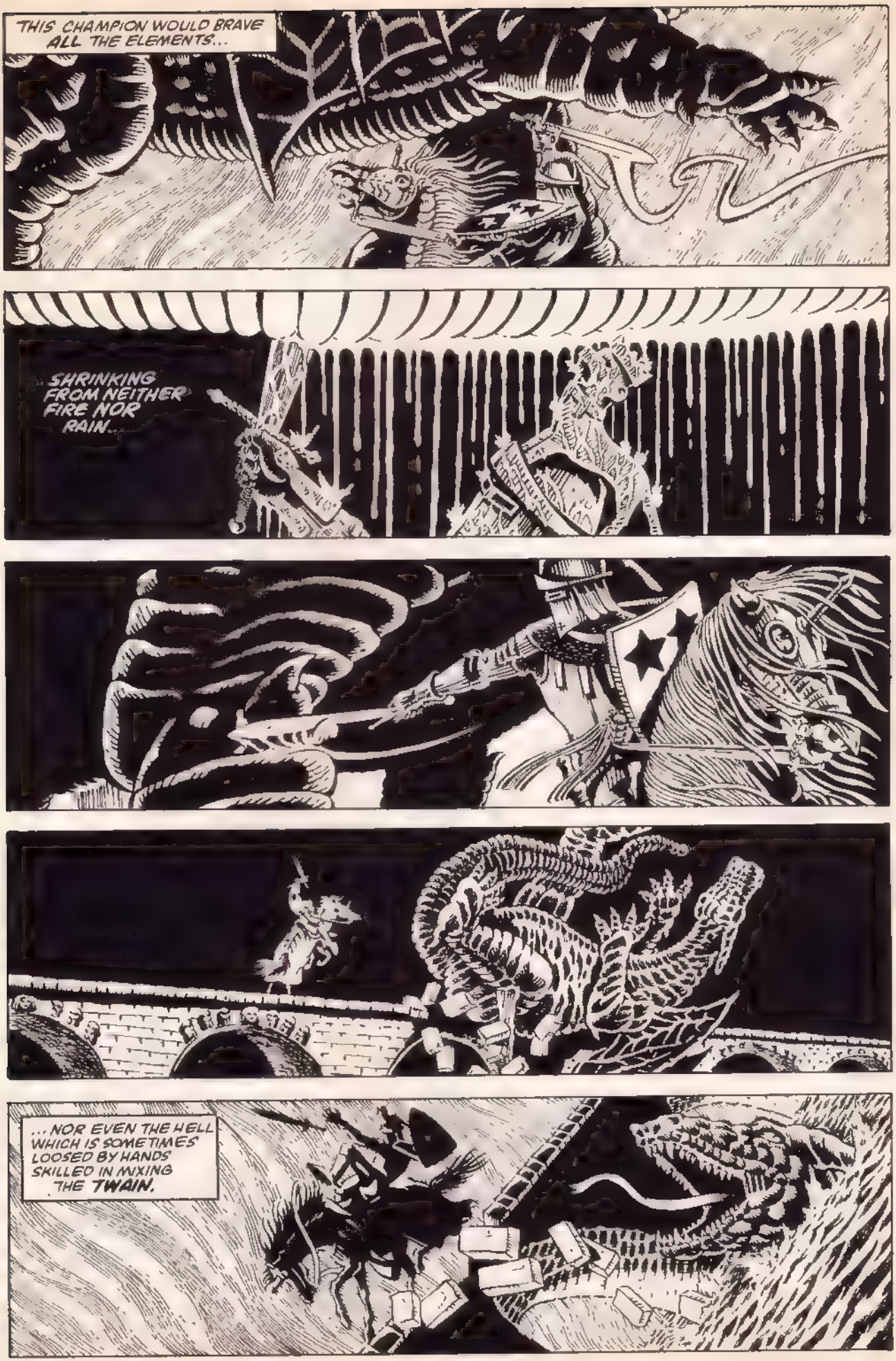
TRESS-BOUND, THE TEARS ARE SPILLED LIKE RAIN FROM ABOVE...

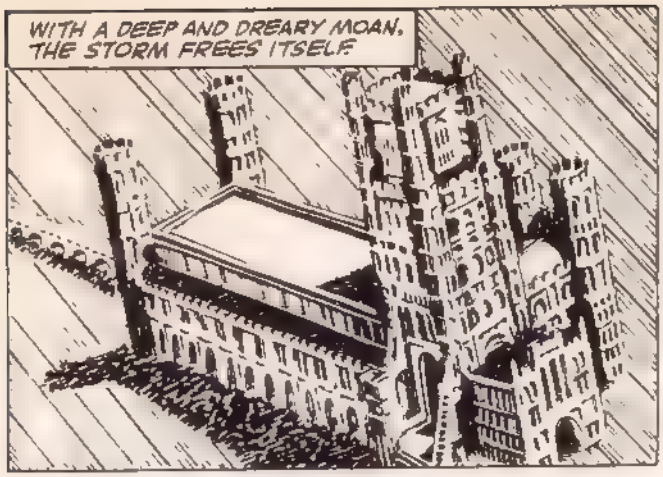
DAN DAY

..TO RAISE FIRE FROM THE WATERS BELOW..
FACES OF COLD STONE WEEP..
.. FOR, LONG AGO WHEN SUCH THINGS STILL MATTERED--


--MANY OF THEM FACED THE SAME HEAT.

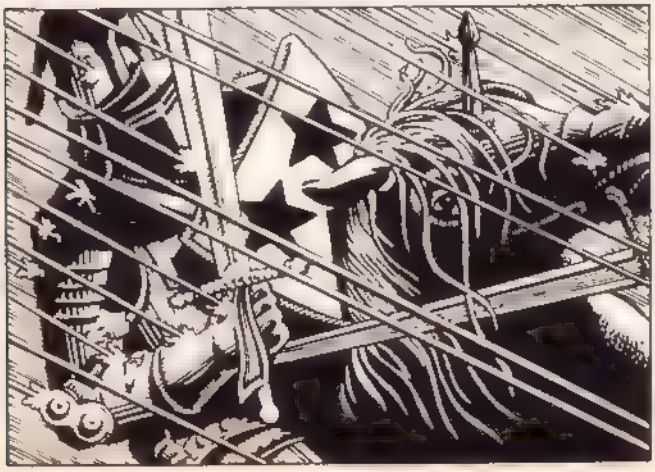
YET THIS CHAMPION WOULD PROVE HIMSELF DIFFERENT..

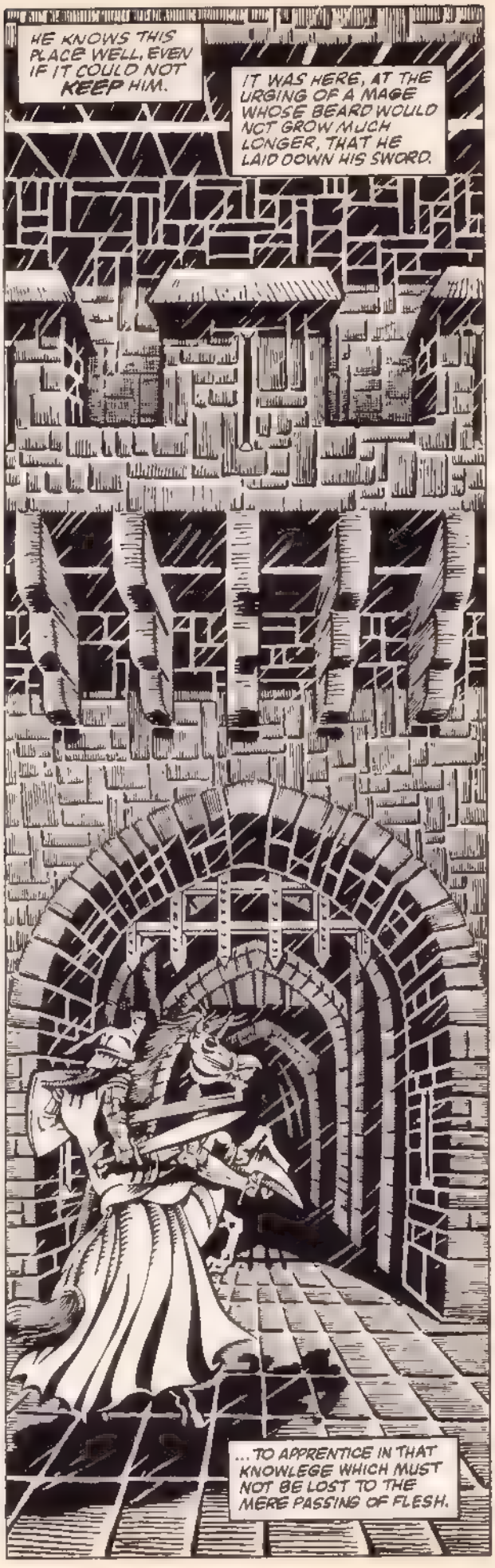

THIS CHAMPION WOULD BRAVE ALL THE ELEMENTS...
...SHRINKING FROM NEITHER FIRE NOR RAIN...
...NOR EVEN THE HELL WHICH IS SOMETIMES LOOSED BY HANDS SKILLED IN MIXING THE TWAIN.


WITH A DEEP AND DREARY MOAN, THE STORM FREES ITSELF.

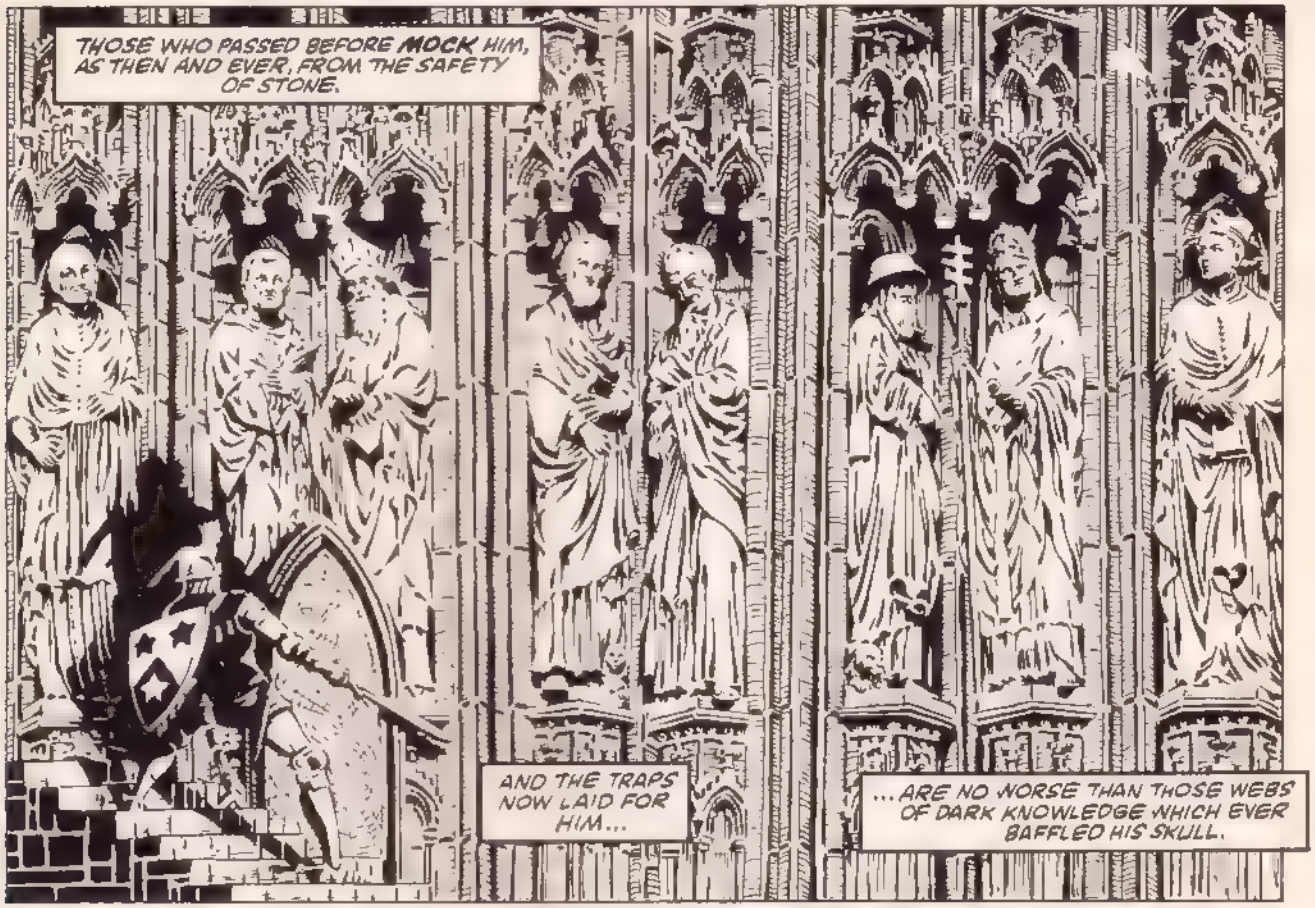
A PANE RATTLES AND HUMS.
MOLECULES ARE DISTURBED.

WHY, WOMAN?
WHAT DID YOU WANT?




HE KNOWS THIS PLACE WELL, EVEN IF IT COULD NOT KEEP HIM.
IT WAS HERE, AT THE URGING OF A MAGE WHOSE BEARD WOULD NOT GROW MUCH LONGER, THAT HE LAID DOWN HIS SWORD.
...TO APPRENTICE IN THAT KNOWLEGE WHICH MUST NOT BE LOST TO THE MERE PASSING OF FLESH.

IN TRUTH, HE WAS A POOR STUDENT, EASILY DISTRACTED, AND THE MOLECULES CONTAINED IN THESE SPACES ARE STRANGE TO HIM STILL.


THOSE WHO PASSED BEFORE MOCK HIM, AS THEN AND EVER, FROM THE SAFETY OF STONE.
AND THE TRAPS NOW LAID FOR HIM...
...ARE NO WORSE THAN THOSE WEBS OF DARK KNOWLEDGE WHICH EVER BAFFLED HIS SKULL.

NO SURPRISE, THEN THAT SUCH TRAPS SHOULD CONTAIN SURPRISES...

... SHAPED INTO IMAGES OF HIMSELF UNDER THE HELM.

SEALING HIS CONTRACT WITH THE MAGE ON NEUTRAL GROUND, HE COULD NOT KNOW THAT HE WOULD COME TO MEET HER HERE...

HE WHO HOLDS MY FACE AND FEEDS MY FLESH TO THE PATRONS OF HIS POWER--

--WELCOMES YOUR RETURN, APPRENTICE!

NOR COULD HE KNOW THAT SHE WOULD SO FULLY OBSESS HIM, DISTRACTING HIM FROM DIFFICULT STUDIES AND LABORIOUS EXPERIMENTS.

THE PENALTY FOR YOUR SIN OF THEFT MUST BE SEVERE, SO *SACRED* WAS THE OBJECT *STOLEN*.

... FILLING HIM, LIKE RAGING RAIN SEEKING A STILLED STREAM, WITH A RUSHING DESIRE WHICH LEFT ROOM FOR NOTHING ELSE.

IF THE MAGE MUST BE PARTED FROM HIS *LOVE*, THEN HE DEMANDS THAT YOU BE PARTED FROM *LIFE*, THEREBY JOINING THE BLEACHED AND BRITTLE RANKS OF MY FELLOWS...

... BUT EVEN THEN, YOUR FACE AND FLESH WILL ROT AS *SCANT RECOMPENSE*.

... AND THUS HAS THE MAGE DECREED THAT EVEN IN DEATH YOUR PRIOR CONTRACT MUST BE *FULFILLED*.

HE COULD NOT KNOW THAT SUCH OBSESSION WOULD FORCE HIM TO TAKE UP THE SWORD ONCE AGAIN, KNOWLEDGE SHIRKED, TO STEAL AWAY NOT ALONE AS HE CAME BUT GLADDENED BY THE BURDEN OF HIS PRIZE

TRUST HIS TEACHER NOW, TO DEMAND *REPETITION* OF THE EXERCISE-- UNDER TERMS OF *HEIGHTENED* DIFFICULTY.

WHAT DEATH STRIVES TO SAY, CHAMPION, IS *THIS*:

TO POSSESS *HER* HEART... YOU MUST TEAR *MINE* FROM ITS BREAST, AND EMBRACE IT AS YOUR *OWN*.

A CHORD OF FAINT PERCEPTION IS DEEPLY STRUCK, THRUMMING WITH THE GHOST-BREATH OF A UNDERSTANDING ONCE ALMOST GRASPED...

...BUT IT IS QUICKLY **DROWNED** IN THUNDER.

HE WILL **NOT BE STOPPED.**

AND SO HAVE YOU DEFEATED MY **MAGICKS**...

AND SO HAVE YOU WHELMED MY POWER AND MY KNOWLEDGE...

AND SO HAS YOUR SWORD EARNED THE RIGHT TO MY **LIFE.**

TAKE IT!

AND NOW ARE THE MOLECULES **GREATLY** DISTURBED, AS THE RAW POWER OF HEAVEN'S GRIEF FLOWS FULLY INTO THE HEART...

...FORGING SWORD AND SOUL INTO ONE...

YESSSSSS..

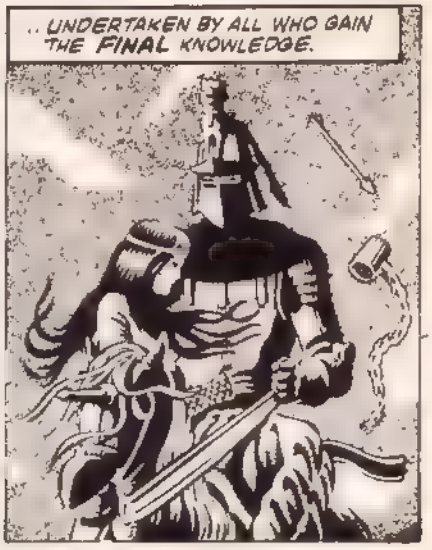
AT LAST... YOU PROVE YOURSELF A **GOOD APPRENTICE.**

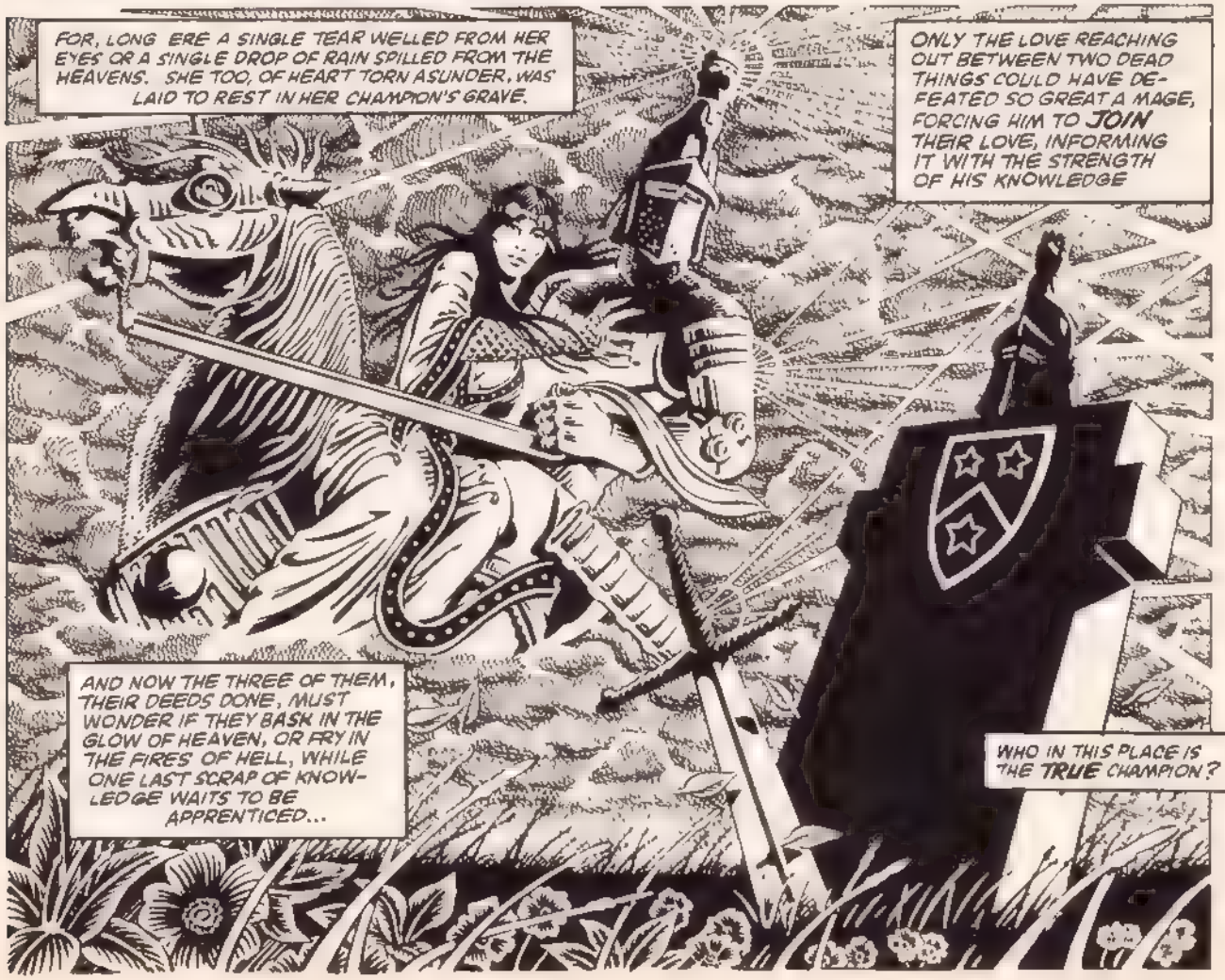
...AND AS THE MAGE WEEPS NOT IN THE FACE OF THE STORM...

...BUT BURNS INSTEAD IN THE FAST FALL OF RAIN...
...SURRENDERING FLESH AND FACE TO ANOTHER...
TO THE CHAMPION.
THE BEARD OF THE MAGE WILL GROW NO LONGER...
FOR THE PRIOR CONTRACT IS FINALLY FULFILLED, THE FACELESS ALCHEMY FINALLY COMPLETE.
IN A SEXLESS UNION OF DISTURBED MOLECULES, THE STUDENT HAS BECOME THE TEACHER...
... WHILE THE TEACHER LIVES ON IN HIS STUDENT.
WHAT I WANTED, MAGE...

...WAS THAT MAGIC BORN OF THE HEART AND NOT MERELY OF THE MIND OR THE HANDS.
WHAT I WANTED WAS THAT WHICH TRANSCENDS EACH FACE IT TOUCHES..
AND HOLDS A POWER SO VAST THAT IT CAN FILL THE EYES WITH HEAVEN'S GRIEF.
I KNOW.
YOU HAVE US BOTH NOW.
COME-- AND THE THREE OF US SHALL RIDE TOGETHER, FEARING FAITHLESS TREACHERY NEVERMORE.

AND RIDE THEY DO, FROM DEEP DARKNESS...



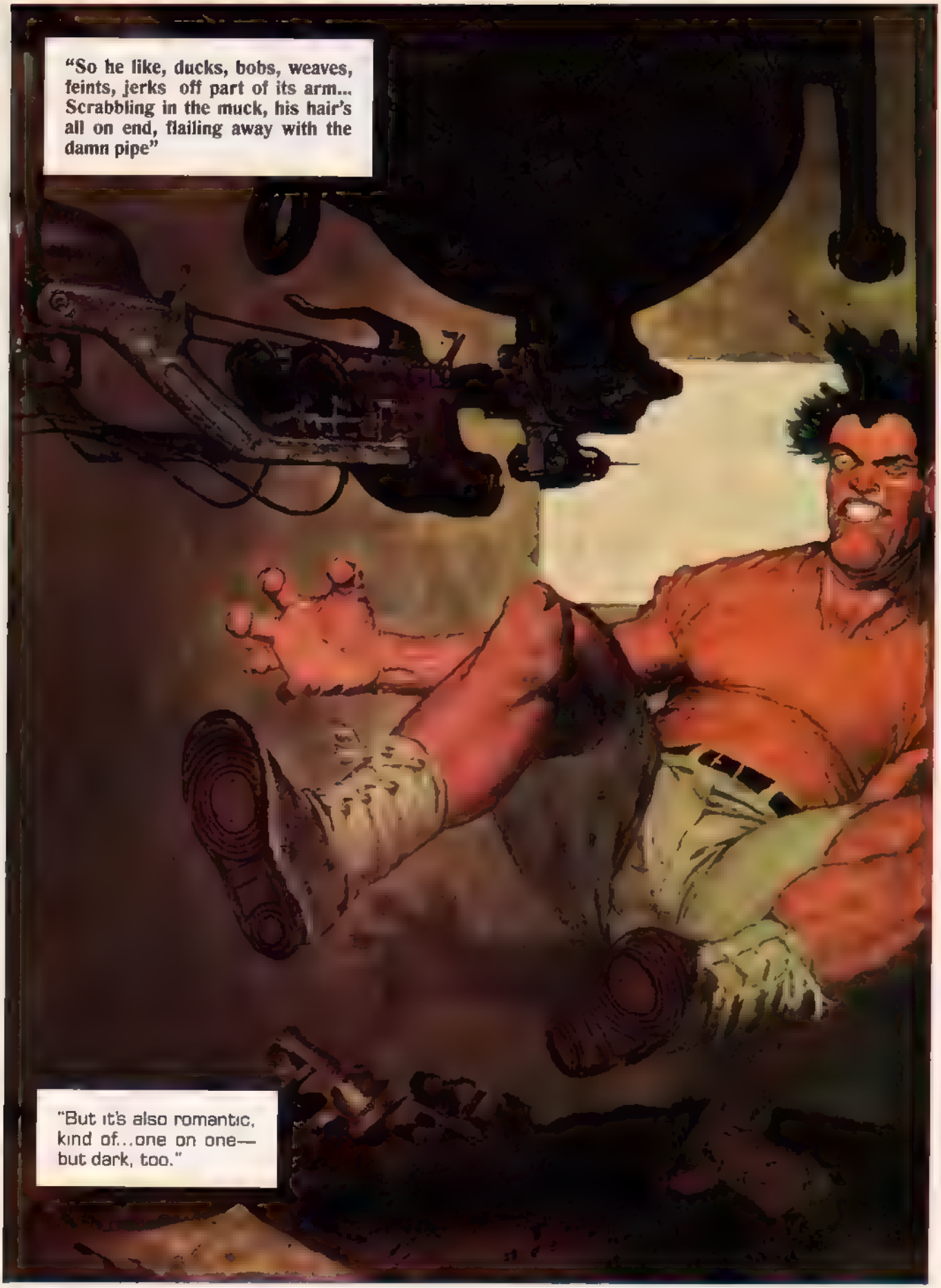

FOR, LONG ERE A SINGLE TEAR WELLED FROM HER EYES OR A SINGLE DROP OF RAIN SPILLED FROM THE HEAVENS. SHE TOO, OF HEART TORN ASUNDER, WAS LAID TO REST IN HER CHAMPION'S GRAVE.
ONLY THE LOVE REACHING OUT BETWEEN TWO DEAD THINGS COULD HAVE DEFEATED SO GREAT A MAGE, FORCING HIM TO JOIN THEIR LOVE, INFORMING IT WITH THE STRENGTH OF HIS KNOWLEDGE
AND NOW THE THREE OF THEM, THEIR DEEDS DONE, MUST WONDER IF THEY BASK IN THE GLOW OF HEAVEN, OR FRY IN THE FIRES OF HELL, WHILE ONE LAST SCRAP OF KNOWLEDGE WAITS TO BE APPRENTICED...
WHO IN THIS PLACE IS THE TRUE CHAMPION?

© 1985 Phil Hale

MANIAC
BEER
"It was a typical machine fuck-up; he paid the money. Nothin' happened."
"Maybe he was from a foreign land, maybe Dayton."
"Make mine a Maniac™."
Copyright ©Maniac Beer

"You know...no studs, no leather, no hair-dye; maybe he's not a punk, maybe he's just an asshole."
"He got all tense, trembly sort of. He looked like an asshole."
"His fist went right through it, like it was cheese or somethin', I mean, shit... you know?"

"The machine farted steam, split, unbuckled, unfolded, like some cheap Japanese toy. Then it dipped an' lunged on greased skids, right at him, smooth, red, an' screamy...this is like the big surprise..."
"His face purpled an' clenched like a big fist"
"Christ, it was awful, reddish, sort of"


"So he like, ducks, bobs, weaves, feints, jerks off part of its arm... Scrabbling in the muck, his hair's all on end, flailing away with the damn pipe"
"But it's also romantic, kind of...one on one—but dark, too."

"But it's a home run, K.O., down for the count. Plants the pipe in the middle of that shiny red dome, an' it crumples in like disappointing jiffy-pop."

"Drops into the mud, not fair, really. He works it over with its own arm, all sweaty, grabs a beer, lopes off, red as a beet, looks like he's thinking...like about drugs ...or something."

FEEDBACK (continued from page 35)

If you enjoy *Kent*'s work, then you don't want to miss the beautiful job he does on *Epic* comics *Moonshadow* #6. He's pinch-hitting for *J Muth*—his collaborator on The Seed and the Sower—who's hard at work on a Dracular graphic novel. We've taken an advance peek at *Kent*'s pages, and we think they're fantastic.

By the way, Galactus was created and named by a couple of gentlemen you may have heard of—*Jack Kirby*, still one of the finest artists the comics industry has ever known, and our own *Stan Lee*, who tops off every masthead of this very publication.

Dear Stan and Archie,

I just read in the fan press that **Epic Illustrated** is slated for cancellation with #34. Can this be true? The article said that the main reason was that the magazine takes up considerable time and resources, and it was felt that they would be better devoted to the ever-expanding **Epic** line of comics.

I would be sorry indeed to see **Epic** bite the dust. While I have by no means loved every story to appear in this magazine, I have found it to be consistently interesting and worthwhile, with every issue having features I enjoyed. And I felt that even things I didn't like were usually well put together and of some merit.

Presumably, **Marvel** knows how to best allocate its resources, but I think that **Epic**'s passing will leave a void in the **Marvel** line. Your particular editorial viewpoint of the anthology magazine is nowhere duplicated, within **Marvel** or outside it. In particular, the passing of a quality-reproduction magazine-format comics publication is to be regretted. Once, not so many years ago, magazine-format comics were seen as the salvation of the industry, allowing access to the larger newsstand market. However, ironically, with the growth of the direct market, anything that doesn't "look like a comic book" (i.e. is not the size of the traditional four-colour ones) has trouble in getting displayed properly and in being accepted by fandom—while the "regular newsstand" market never really did accept the magazine-format comics. Hence, magazine-format comics seem to have been caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, doomed to at best a minor position in the market. (Ironically, **Epic** #32 announced Marvel's **Savage Tales**, a new magazine-format comic. However, it is in black and white ((not that I have anything against black and white comics mind you!)) and its very name shows it will not be a "replacement" for **Epic**.)

Thus, I question the wisdom of discontinuing **Epic**. It was a home for many stories that might not otherwise see print and certainly not so auspicious a forum. Still, I realize that my voice will be lost in the wilderness on this.

I found myself wondering if the **Epic** serials could be completed by issue #34 but looking at #32 I see that there are only two serials left, with **Toadswart** completing next issue. Thus, only the Galactus serial would seem to be in danger of being left hanging (unless you have a swift and surprising wind-up planned—a possibility I do not dismiss).

This issue, there were a couple of real characters—quite different in tone, though. It was good to see the maniac energy of **Mark Wheatley** (late of **Mars**, that vastly under-rated comic book adventure), this time on **Surprise in the Box of Toast Posties.** It was weird, entertaining, gripping, surprising, and confusing—just what I've come to expect from Mark! On the other hand, **Love's Labour**, by **Rodi** and **Dowling**, was an almost sedate piece, but with an undercurrent of urgency and a perfectly ironic ending. I certainly can't envision that one ever appearing in **Savage Tales!** (You mention the ever-popular Mr. Whipple in the table of contents. Did you know that the actor who portrays him is Canadian? Ah, the insidious ways we work ourselves into your national consciousness!)

So, I guess it's farewell to the father of the **Epic** line. Here's to hoping that the children and grandchildren can live up to (and surpass) their ancestor.

T.M. Maple
Weston, Ontario
Canada

***TM*, here, as regular readers know, has been one of our longtime readers—very supportive of much of our work, and often one of our sternest and most intelligent critics. It's been nice having you with us, *Mr. Maple*.**

If you have letters or comments you'd like to see in these pages, address them to:

FEEDBACK
Epic Illustrated
% Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

NEXT ISSUE

OUR LAST ISSUE AND PERHAPS OUR BEST

featuring

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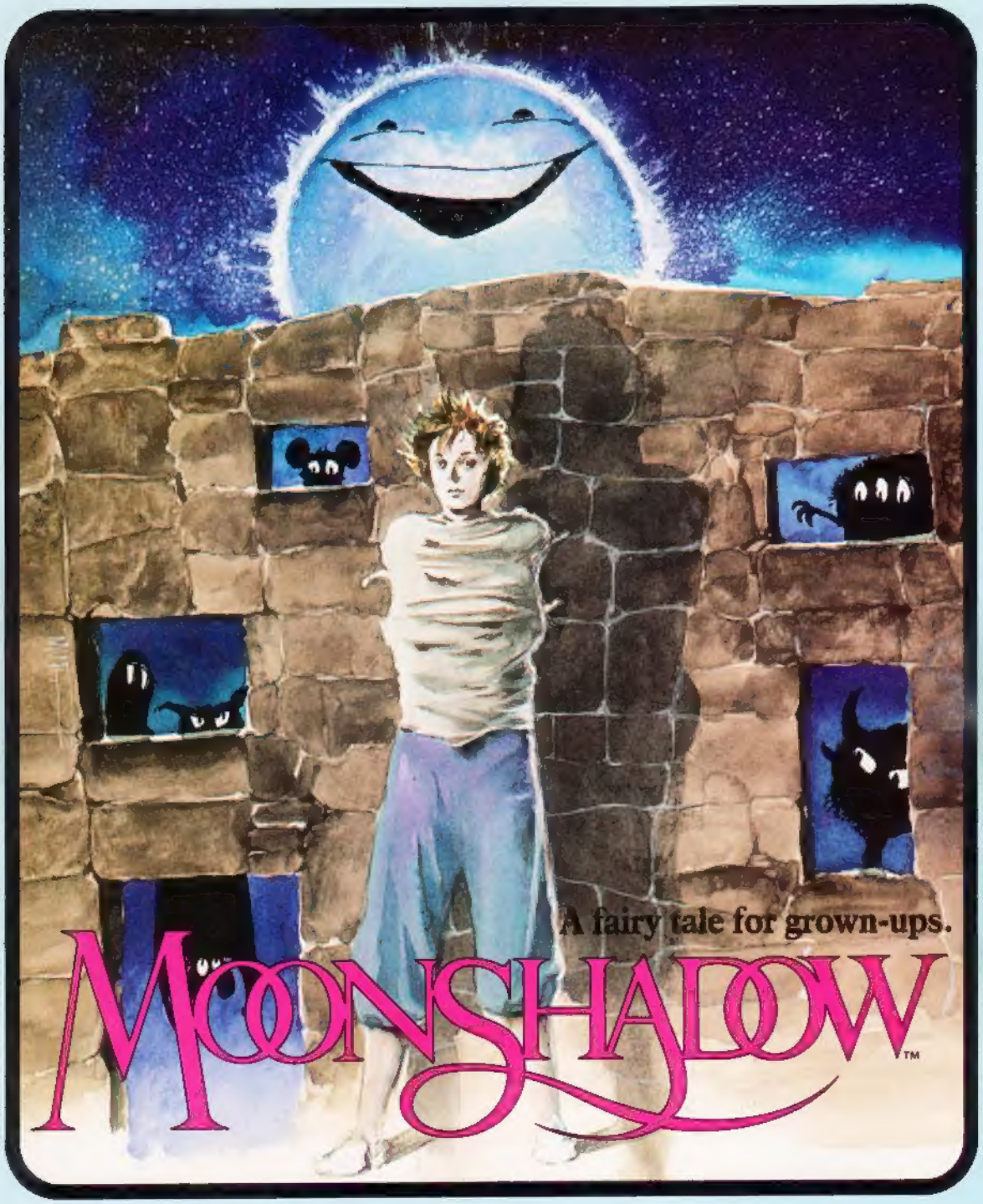
WHY ARE THESE PEOPLE SMILING?



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